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H. Dryden  
June 1879

Scots Map. Vol 1. 1786. C. 425

5th Jan 7

"Mr Beaumont proposes to complete the topography of the northern parts of our  
"Kingdom by publishing at his own expense a Voyage through the Orkney  
" & Shetland Isles by the Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr George Low Minister of Birsay in  
"Orkney. (How he supported in the undertaking and cost we see.  
"Understand it well qualified for it."

ZOBA.4698

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W. & A. G. MAGNUS. ODENSE.

1844.

A TOUR THROUGH ORKNEY AND SCHETLAND

BY GEORGE LOW

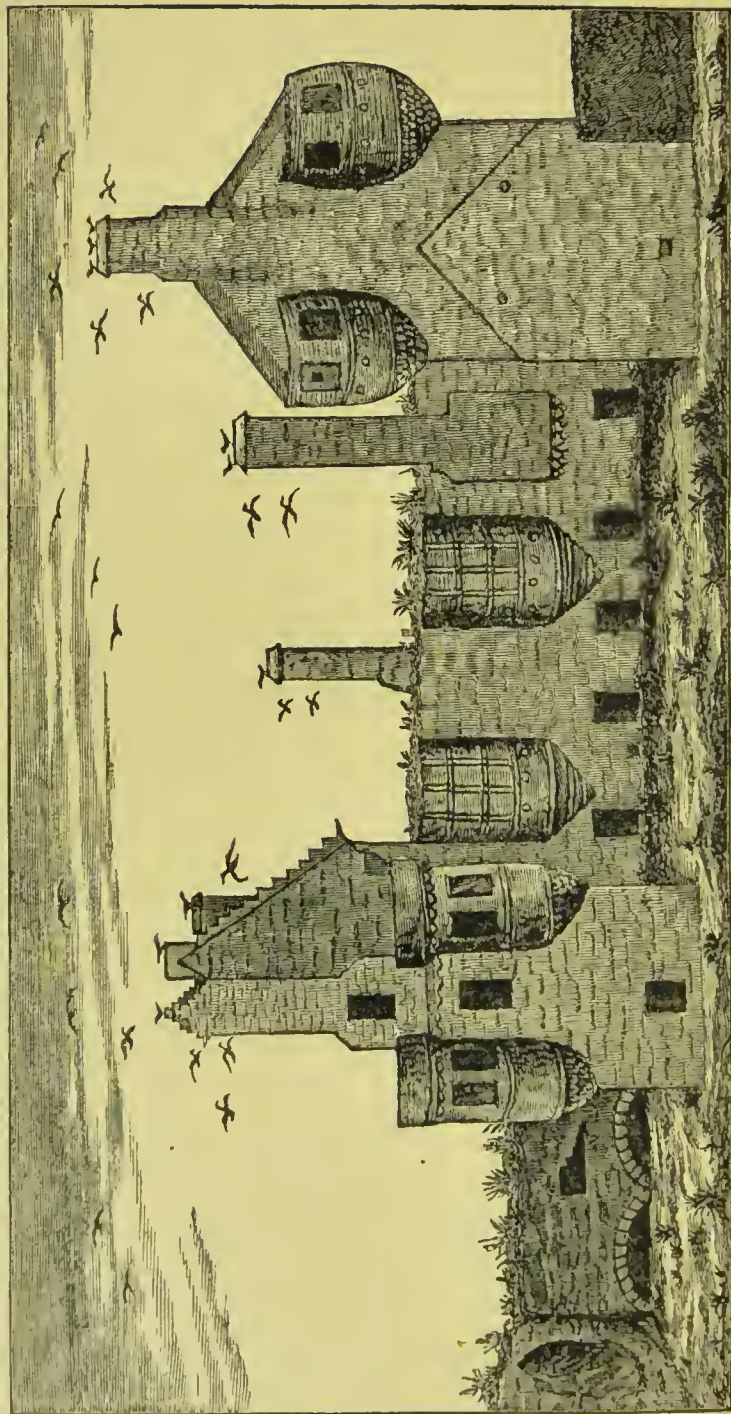


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*The West Prospect of the Ruins of the Palace of Kirkwall*

A TOUR THROUGH THE ISLANDS  
OF  
ORKNEY AND SCHETLAND

CONTAINING HINTS RELATIVE TO THEIR ANCIENT  
MODERN AND NATURAL HISTORY  
COLLECTED IN 1774

BY GEORGE LOW

AUTHOR OF "FAUNA ORCADENSIS"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY JOSEPH ANDERSON

EDITOR OF THE "ORKNEYINGA SAGA," ETC., ETC.

KIRKWALL  
WILLIAM PEACE & SON

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## PREFACE.

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THE existence in MS. of a Tour in Orkney and Shetland in 1774, by Rev. George Low, has long been known to all interested in the literary history of the isles. Pennant, Gough, and Hibbert have severally acknowledged their obligations to its author, while freely availing themselves of his original sketches or descriptions of the scenery, antiquities and natural history of a region abounding in interest and novelty, but far removed from the ordinary track of the literary traveller. Yet though the work of Mr Low has been thus well known, and constantly referred to for more than a century by almost all the writers on topics connected with Orkney and Shetland, it has never been made accessible to the public in the form in which it was originally prepared for publication by the author himself.

Through the kindness of the late David Laing, LL.D., of the Signet Library, Edinburgh, to whom the MS. belongs, the publishers have now been enabled to supply this long-felt want in Orcadian literature. The manuscript has been printed without alteration or abridgment,

and the drawings carefully reproduced by Mr J. T. Reid, the talented author of "Art Rambles in Shetland," &c. A notice of Mr Low, with an account of his writings, has been prepared as an Introduction to the Tour by Mr Joseph Anderson, Editor of the *Orkneyinga Saga*. The proof sheets were carefully revised by Mr Laing, who took a special interest in the work.

Having spared no effort to produce this long-neglected work in a manner worthy of its merits, the publishers are not without hope that it may be possessed of a wider than a merely local interest, on account of its delineations of the habits and modes of life of a people isolated from the general community no less by historical association than by geographical position.

KIRKWALL, *24th January 1879.*

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\* It is uncertain whether any of the first four drawings are by Mr Low.



## INTRODUCTION.

---

GEORGE LOW, the author of "A Tour through Orkney and Schetland, in 1774" (now for the first time published), was born at the village of Edzell, in Forfarshire, in the spring of 1747. The register of the parish of Edzell for that year contains the following entry :—" 1747, March 29 : George Low, lawful son of John Low, kirk-officer, and Isabel Coupar, his spouse, baptized." In addition to his duties as kirk-officer, his father was the oocupant of a small farm in the neighbourhood of the village. John Low is mentioned as joint-ooeupant with James Low, in a lease of the farm of Meikle Tullo, in 1696, and again in 1729 ; and David, the last of a long line of Lows, liferenters and occupants of the same farm, died in 1852 at the age of 78. George Low was an only son. His father died when George was in his thirteenth year, leaving him and two daughters dependent on a widowed mother. The daughters were subsequently married to respectable villagers of Edzell named Thomson and Lindsay, the latter of whom was an ingenious self-taught mechanie. Mrs Low, though left in straitened circumstanees, contrived to give her only son the benefit of a University training, first at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and then at the College of St Salvador, in St Andrews. He was a student there in 1766, as

shown by one of his commonplace books, which is entitled, "A Cabinet of Curiosities, Collected by G. L., Student of Philosophy in St Andrews, 1766." This manuscript volume, which passed into the possession of the late Professor Thomas S. Traill, is interesting, as it contains among astronomical tables, chemical formulæ and notices of chemical phenomena and medical recipes, "a diagram of my own solar microscope, constructed by myself"—which shows the bent of his mind at that period toward philosophical speculation and experiment. This fascinating study appears to have taken a strong hold on his ardent temperament, and he continued to prosecute his microscopic researches in after years with an enthusiasm which ultimately led to the loss of his eyesight—the natural result of excessive application with the rude instruments at his command.

Having been taken to Orkney some time previous to August 1768 by the Rev. James Alison, then minister of Holm, by whom he was recommended to a tutorship in the family of Mr Robert Graham of Stromness, Mr Low continued his studies until he was licensed by the Presbytery of Cairston in 1771. He remained as tutor in the family of Mr Graham till 1773, prosecuting his researches in Natural History with an ardour intensified by the consciousness that he was working in fields that were then comparatively unknown. How zealously he laboured may be gathered from the description of his manuscripts containing the results of his microscopical researches from 1771 to 1773, which also passed into the possession of the late Professor Traill, who states in a manuscript note-book that previous to the preparation of his "Fauna Orcadensis," and "Flora



Oreadensis," Mr Low had prepared "a considerable work on microscopic objects, illustrated by the most beautiful China ink drawings, which shew him to have been possessed of uncommon skill in that art, as is also proved by his exquisite copies of all the plants figured in the 'Flora Lapponica' of Linnaeus now in my possession. The microscopical observations became my property more than twenty years ago, and seem evidently to have been intended for publication on the plan of Baker's 'Essay on the Microscope.' The objects are chiefly derived from the animal and vegetable kingdoms. They are accurately delineated and shortly described, and the work, like that of Linnaeus, is interspersed with reflections of his personal piety, on the beneficence of the Deity."

This manuscript was commenced by Mr Low in 1769. Its title is "Microscopical Observations by George Low, Student of Divinity." The earliest drawing with a date is subscribed "Oct. 15th, 1772, G. L. *del.*," and the latest, "G. L. *fecit*, March 20th, 1773." The work is divided into three parts, as follows:—Part I. A Course of Microscopical Observations by G. L., 1771–72; Part II. An Examination of many of the Articles in Baker, Joblot, and the Authors of the Spectacle de la Nature, by G. L., 1772; Part III. Containing Figures and Descriptions of the Minuter Parts of the History of Nature.

Considered as the work of an unknown student, isolated from all communication with the scientific world, deprived of access to books by the remoteness of his situation, and destitute of instruments except the rudest then constructed, this microscopical manuscript may be fairly regarded as the most extraordinary of the author's productions. It

contains a preface giving a short account of the microscope in general, and its application to the purposes of the naturalist. In it he says—"The microscope which I have made use of in these observations is a single one of Mr Wilson's construction, or which commonly goes under his name, together with *a water-one of my own*." Professor Traill adds the information that the Wilson's pocket microscope which Mr Low used "was found in the wreck of a ship" which was cast ashore on the Orkney coast, "and is now in the possession of Mr William Graham Watt of Breckness, who purchased it, with many of his books and some of his manuscripts, at a sale of Mr Low's effects after his death. The water microscope is also in Mr Watt's possession. It consists of a simple upright frame of hard wood, with a support for the lens, a sliding frame to sustain the capsule containing the fluid to be examined, and a plain glass mirror placed on a hinge below, to reflect light through the water." They are still preserved at Skail House.

The drawings include representations of various species of minute fungi and confervæ; sertularia, monoeuli, nereides; two species of volvox; the larva of an ephemeris; the different stages of the development of the larva of the gnat, and a dissection of its piercers; the scales of the wings, and other parts of various butterflies, moths, &c.; figures of mites, the circulation of the blood in the tail of the tadpole; the pollen, minute seeds, and sections of the leaves and stems of various plants; the eyes of flies, spiders and snails; the structure of hairs in different animals; the subcutaneous scales of eels; the forms of crystallization of various salts; and the animalculæ of stagnant water, &c., &c.

When Mr Low began these observations, he tells us that he had not seen any book on the subject except the few microscopic drawings in the "Spectacle de la Nature." But afterwards having had an opportunity of seeing Baker's and Joblot's works on the microscope, he was greatly disappointed with the engravings. They seemed to him such poor representations of the objects with which he had become familiar in all their native beauty, that he laments the inadequacy of most of them, and characterises a few as being rather burlesques than serious representations. "As this is a new world," he says, "and unknown to our fathers, it is a great pity to introduce the inhabitants of it to our posterity under any disadvantage. We ought certainly to take proper care at least to give their true appearance, which, though it is various in the different species, is agreeable and curious in all, and must afford a very interesting and amusing study to the enquirer after the minuter parts of creation, and at the same time furnish him with the noblest thoughts of the Creator, who has distinguished himself so much in these parts of his work, which by the less curious and more unthinking are disregarded and despised, as far below their notice—yet here they may be taught to know that nothing in the visible creation is below the attention of a rational creature, and though these are the minuter yet they by no means less mark the hand of their great Maker."

The third part of the manuscript is incomplete, and concludes with the following paragraph:—"Mr Joblot describes a microscopic apparatus invented by him for viewing the circulation of the blood, but as he gives no account of any experiments made with it, I intend, in the

sequel of these observations, to supply that defect in some measure by a course of remarks on this subject, from observations made with an apparatus of my own." But these remarks were never completed, and the last drawing is dated March 20th, 1773, when, as we shall see from his correspondence with Mr Paton and Mr Pennant, his thoughts and energies were being turned into another direction.

Professor Traill's statement, that Mr Low was possessed of uncommon skill in the delineation of such objects, is amply borne out by an inspection of his drawings. In the hope that the manuscript of the tour through the North Isles of Orkney in 1778 might still be recoverable, application was made to Rev. John Reid Omond, minister of the Free Church at Monzie, and through him to his brother, R. Omond, M.D., Edinburgh, who promptly placed in the hands of the present writer all the manuscripts of Mr Low's works which had belonged to Professor Traill that are now known to exist. Among these there is not only the microscopical work above described, but an earlier fragment entitled:—"Some Observations on Natural History, founded on experience, together with descriptions of Curious Animals, Plants, Fossils, Microscopic Views, &c., &c. The whole Illustrated with Drawings very proper for the easier understanding of the Descriptions. Collected, Observed, and the Drawings made by George Low, Student of Divinity, Stromness, Orkney. Anno Domini 1770." The pen and ink drawings which it contains are most beautifully executed. Besides these, there are also a number of loose drawings, many of which are exquisitely finished. One, on a sheet of paper about seven by five inches, contains minutely detailed drawings of seventy-three different

species of insects, all of the natural size, and some so minute that the form can only be clearly distinguished by a magnifying glass.

There is also a portion of the rough draft of the Tour, partly written in pencil; but the largest manuscript is a "History of the Orkneys," comprised in about 800 quarto pages closely written, and apparently intended for publication. It begins with a Description of Orkney, divided into chapters, as follows:—(1.) Of the Name; (2.) Of the Situation and Number of the Orkney Islands; (3.) Of the Climate, Weather, and General State of the Atmosphere; (4.) Of the Face of the Country and its Division into Land and Water; (5.) Of the Tides; (6.) Orkney Divided into Islands; (7.) Of the Inhabitants in General, their Manners, Temper, Disposition and Pursuits; (8.) Of the several Arts, which are performed by the people of Orkney in a manner almost peculiar to themselves or other Northerns; (9.) Of the Tenures and Divisions of Lands in Orkney; (10.) Of the Soil; (11.) Of the State of Agriculture; (12.) Of the State of Trade in Orkney—of Manufactures and Fishings; (13.) Of the Other Advantages of Orkney. Proceeding then to the historical part, he says:—"After thus giving a short description of the Isles of Orkney as divided into land and water, islands greater and less, having also taken notice of the inhabitants, their genius and disposition, the present state of Arts and Manufactures among them, &c., it will be necessary, in pursuance of our plan of a General History, to enquire concerning the first or most ancient inhabitants, as far as probability in history can lead us; as also of the more modern possessors, as we may be directed by history. This part may be divided into three periods—(1.) From the

peopling of the Isles to their being subjected to the Kingdom of Norway, which we may call the uncertain or fabulous period; (2.) From their coming into the hands of the Norwegians to their being pledged to our King James the Third by Christian, King of Norway, which period is far less involved in darkness, as being connected with the history of these countries, and the relations made in general by eye-witnesses of the transactions they relate. As to the Third Period, it is authenticated by Charters, Contracts, and other public Records. In every one of these periods, mention will be made of the monuments that still remain of the most ancient times, and the whole as far as possible reduced to an uniform series of events."

As Mr Low's description of the two Stone Circles of Stennis does not appear in his "Tour," and as the smaller of these monuments no longer exists, at least in the condition in which he then found it, the passage is here transcribed:—

"The most remarkable and entire of these ancient monuments are to be seen on the main or largest Island at the bridge, which joins the Lochs of Harray and Stenness. To the westward of that bridge stands a circle of stones of moderate height, none of them exceeding twelve or fourteen feet, many much less, several broken and fallen down, while of others the stump or hole where they have been placed is only discernible. Around and on the outside there is a pretty broad and deep ditch, which probably has been formerly deeper, but the growth of the moss has filled it up. The diameter of the circle is about [sixty] fathoms, which may soon let us see that it has not been a camp, as some pretend, as it must be a small army indeed that would be included in such narrow bounds. Between



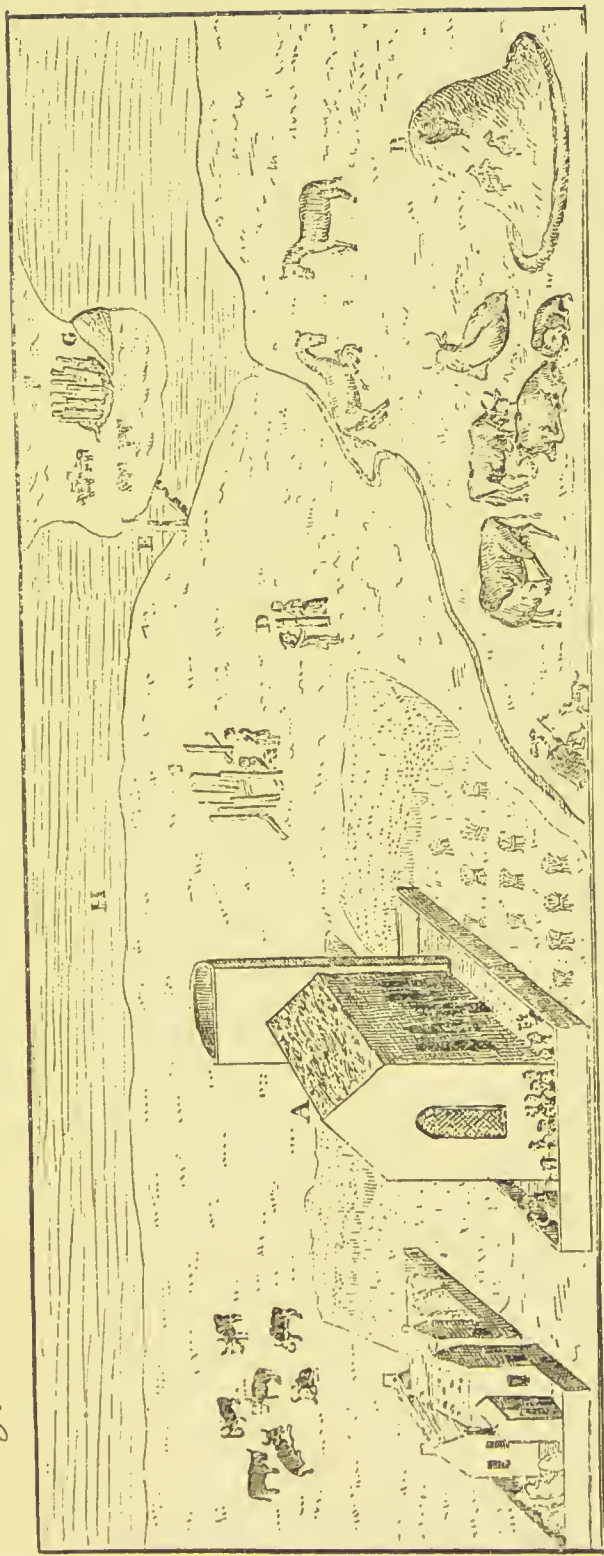
the circle and the Loeh, on the east side, are two small hillocks or tumuli, with as many at some distance to the westward, said to be composed of ashes; however, this is a mistake, for they are of the very same kind as the earth of the ditch, being fragments of a shelly brittle rock, and probably have been formed of gravel, &c., out of the ditch when it was made, and thrown there to be out of the way, tho' there is nothing more probable than they have served other purposes also, as we shall have reason to enquire. At the east end of the bridge stands a semicircle of much more remarkable stones, as most of these are eighteen or twenty feet above ground, and very massy in their other dimensions; the largest five feet and a half broad, and eighteen inches thick. But if we consider that they may be perhaps as much under the ground as above it, or at least a third of their whole length, we shall find their bulk and weight immense, and with astonishment behold the work of our ancestors, which we, assisted by all the powers of art, would scarce undertake to imitate. The diameter of this semicircle is ninety-six feet, and the stones, tho' placed in a circular manner, are at so unequal distances, as to give room to think there have been more of them than is now to be seen. The drawing shows these stones in their present state, which is four entire, and one broken. It is not ditched about like the former, but surrounded with an artificial mound partly raised on the live earth, as the other was cut from it. Here the circle has never been completed; both the position of the stones, and the surrounding work, show that the design has been a semicircle; neither are there any mounts so near this as the former, the nearest being a quarter of a mile or more



distant. Near the circle are several stones set on end without any regular order, or several of them being so much broken, hinder us to see the design of them; also, at a little distance from the semicircle, stands a pretty broad stone, probably broke from its original height, with a round hole cut through it, not in the middle, but to one side of it, very much worn as if by constant friction in tying anything by this hole; and at the end of the bridge a very large stone, equal to any in the semicircle. The drawing will give a tolerable idea of the above, which are the most remarkable of their kind in Orkney."

The drawing of the Stones of Stennis referred to in this description by Mr Low (and also in his letters to Mr Paton) is not now known to be in existence. Its place is therefore supplied by the reproduction of a curious contemporary drawing, which exhibits in a sort of bird's-eye view the relative positions of the two circles at Stennis, the "Stone of Odin," the tumulus of Maeshow, and the old church of Stennis with its remarkable steeple. This drawing was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1784 by Rev. Dr Robert Henry, minister of Greyfriars Church, and author of a "History of Great Britain on a New Plan," published in six volumes quarto, 1771-1793. From this work, which is now known only as a literary curiosity of the most ponderous nature, Dr Henry realised the large sum of £3,300, while poor Mr Low's more modest productions, though vastly superior in merit and value, failed to find a publisher. As the description of the probable purposes of these monuments, which is appended to the drawing, coincides to a certain extent with the views expressed by Mr Low in his Manuscript

*A Perspective View of the Standing Stones in the Parish of Sincuisse in Orkney.*





History, it is probable that it may have been partly supplied by him :—

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING.

These stones are by some people thought to be the Circle of Loda, spoken of by the Poet Fingal, their situation and the face of the country resembling his description of the place, where Loda's Circle was erected. However, it is plain that they have been erected for places of worship in the times of Paganism ; but by what means they have been conveyed to this place, is not easily accounted for, because of their weight and the distance they must have been carried, which is at least four miles, there being no place nearer that stones of their quality and length could be dug out of the quarry. One of them, called the Watch Stone (marked above thus E), is sixteen feet high above ground, and at least there will be four feet below, which makes it 20 feet long, it is four in breadth, and eighteen inches thick ; therefore must weigh eight ton two hunderweight.

A.—The Kirk of Stainhouse, upon the west end of which is built in form of a semicircle a steeple.

B.—A mount or rising ground, supposed to have been raised for archers to shoot at, there is a pretty large trench thrown up round the foot of it, at some distance. When Oliver Cromwell's soldiers were in this country they dug tolerably deep in the top, but found nothing but earth.

C.—Standing Stones, called by the inhabitants of Orkney the Temple of the Moon ; they are formed into a semicircle. the curve whereof is to the south ; they are from 12 to 14 feet high,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad, and 18 inches thick.

D.—A stone which is supposed to have been used for tying the sacrifice to, it is distant N.E. from the Temple of the Moon about 100 yards, and has a round hole cut artificially through it, six inches in diameter, 3 feet above the ground.

E.—A stone called the Watch Stone, the height and breadth is described above, it is placed at the end of a bridge that leads over the Loch of Stainhouse. This loch is 3 miles long from south to north, but narrow from east to west, especially where the above bridge is thrown over : the country, east of this loch, is pretty level for the distance of a mile from the Temple of the Moon, after which distance there is a ridge of mountains forming a semicircle, the curve whereof is to the east.

F.—Standing Stones called the Temple of the Sun ; they form a

circle, and from 8 to 9 feet high ; they are set up upon the edge of a trench which is dug round them ; the area of this circle is elevated above the adjacent ground, and is in diameter 200 feet.

G.—A small mound supposed to be raised to keep watch upon, since it still retains the name of the Watch Hill or Tower.

There was a custom among the lower class of people in this country which has entirely subsided within these 20 or 30 years. Upon the first day of every new year the common people, from all parts of the country, met at the Kirk of Stainhouse, each person having provision for four or five days ; they continued there for that time dancing and feasting in the kirk. This meeting gave the young people an opportunity of seeing each other, which seldom failed in making four or five marriages every year ; and to secure each other's love, till an opportunity of celebrating their nuptials, they had recourse to the following solemn engagements :—The parties agreed stole from the rest of their companions, and went to the Temple of the Moon, where the woman, in presence of the man, fell down on her knees and prayed the god Wodden (for such was the name of the god they addressed upon this occasion) that he would enable her to perform all the promises and obligations she had and was to make to the young man present, after which they both went to the Temple of the Sun, where the man prayed in like manner before the woman, then they repaired from this to the stone marked D, and the man being on the one side and the woman on the other, they took hold of each other's right hand through the hole (mentioned above), and there swore to be constant and faithful to each other. This ceremony was held so very sacred in those times that the person who dared to break the engagements made here was counted infamous, and excluded all society.

It was likewise usual, when husband and wife could not agree, that they both came to the Kirk of Stainhouse, and after entering into the kirk the one went out at the south and the other at the north door, by which they were holden legally divorced, and free to make another choice.

Principal Gordon, of the Scots College in Paris, who visited Orkney after Mr Low was settled in Birsay, also notices this stone with the hole in it, and relates that its "original design" was discovered about twenty years previously, and that promises of marriage made by the contracting parties, with hands joined through the hole

in the stone, were known as "the promise of Odin," and this method of handfasting was considered more peculiarly binding than any other.

Mr Low had made considerable progress with his History of Orkney before 1773, for in that part of the "Description" in which he speaks of the longevity, &c., of the people, he mentions the case of a clergyman "who has been but once married, and by his wife, who is not yet (1773) forty-six years of age, has had twenty-three children." None of the drawings which he had prepared to illustrate the work are with the manuscript. They seem to have been on detached sheets, and the only one preserved is a faded pencil sketch of the semicircle at Stennis. A partial list of them, however, is given by Mr Low in one of his letters to Mr Paton.

In 1772 Sir Joseph Banks visited the Orkneys, on his return from Iceland, in company with Dr Solander and Dr Lind. He then became acquainted with Mr Low, and seems to have been much struck with the extent and accuracy of his knowledge of the Natural History and Botany of the Isles. It was probably through Dr Banks that Mr Low became known to Mr Pennant, whose tour in Scotland in 1769 had not included the Orkneys.

A number of Mr Low's letters to Mr George Paton, of the Custom House, Edinburgh, a well-known antiquary and correspondent of Pennant, Gough, Bishop Percy and almost all their contemporaries of similar tastes, are preserved in the Advocates' Library, and as they have never been printed, they form, when collated with Mr Pennant's letters to the same gentleman, the most authentic and almost the only existing materials for a brief sketch of



Low's life, during the period from 1772 until his death in 1795.

His first letter to Mr Paton is as follows:—

“STROMNESS, 5th August 1772.

. . . “I am very much obliged to my kind friends who have recommended me to you as capable of giving information anent the natural history of the Orkneys. I should be very sorry if they have over-rated my very small abilities by a mistaken kindness. However, I should think myself very unworthy of their favour, and that I paid but a very ill compliment to their recommendation, if I did not everything in my power to advance your plan; tho’ I am afraid I can be but of little service, as I have studied Natural History in too systematic a manner to serve your present purpose, what comes in my way I shall be sure to communicate. If on this, or any other occasion, you want any particular specimens of birds, &c., &c., I shall do my utmost endeavour to procure them for you.

“I shall send you an Oeconomy as far as it has come under my eye for the time I have been in Orkney, with Mr Aberdeen. Antiquities I am afraid I can say but little about; not that we have no monuments of antiquity, but there is so little account to be got of them, and these so vary that little can be depended on. They have here none or very little of that spirit which was so very conspicuous in the Highlands, of conveying down everything that was very remarkable by tradition. . . . I was lately at the opening of an antient grave in a hillock, by a man who wanted to turn it into arable ground. After digging about two feet deep, he came to a large square stone about two inches thick: this is the covering of a large stone chest made of four stones set on edge; in the bottom was a little blackish dust, with a few ends of the larger bones, which seemed as if they had been thrown carelessly in, being found in no order; about the middle lay a piece of twisted rushes-like matter which crumbled to ashes; but what was most remarkable, was a pretty large piece of a skull, which was fresh-coloured and hard, without any visible decay. I have often heard it said that blockheads have thick skulls, he that owned this must have been a very great one, for this was allowed by numbers who saw it to be much larger and much thicker than any they ever saw. . . . There were no fibulae, urn, &c., in this coffin by which to fix the date of it.”

A few months afterwards Mr Low wrote to Mr Paton,



giving an account of the opening of a tumulus on the links of Skail. Mr Paton transmitted the letter to Mr Gough, by whom it was communicated to the Society of Antiquaries of London, March 12th and 19th, 1773. It is printed in the Transactions of the Society, in an abridged form, (*Archaeologia*, vol. III. p. 276), and is here given from the original:—

“STROMNESS, 27th November 1772.

. . . “The traditions concerning the antiquities of this country are very vague, and little to be depended on. There are, indeed, many remains which bear the stamp of the remotest time, such as the burial places formerly mentioned (and which I am going to speak further of), and the circles of stones which are still remaining on the mainland; but all that can be gathered is that they were formerly held in veneration, but for what reason is not to be by their accounts investigated. I intend soon, however, to take a step to Harray (which is an inland parish, and the inhabitants have the least communication with the rest of the world, and of consequence may be most clear in their traditional accounts), to see what I can pick up. When Mr Banks was here I was with him every day, and he was pleased to make me director of his Orkney tour. One day in particular, we went a grave digging in the Links of Skail, on the mainland, where there are great numbers of Tumuli. We pitched upon one which seemed never to have been moved since its first construction, and Mr Banks ordered his people to begin at one side and dig to the other that we might see the whole fabrick of it. It was of a flattish conical shape. After digging away a great quantity of sand till we came near the centre of the hill, the people struck their spades on several large stones; upon which Mr Banks ordered them to dig round them, and the whole construction appeared as I have sketched it with my pen: first a large quantity of sand, then a large parcel of great stones, which seemed to have been taken from the neighbouring sea shore. When these were removed the coffin or chest appeared, which was composed of four stones, covered with a very large fifth stone. In this lay the old gentleman (for so it appeared by his teeth he was) on his side, with his hands folded on his breast, his knees drawn up to his belly, and his heels towards his hips. This was a highly preserved skeleton, notwithstanding the length of time it must have lain. All the bones remained, only they were softish, till they hardened in the air; the flesh was in

the form of a whitish earth, lying about the bones of the thicker parts of the body, and on the arms, &c., was scattered a sort of blackish fibres, which Dr Lind supposed might have been the vascular system ; what was very remarkable was a bag of some very coarse vegetable stuff, which was laid at his feet, containing the bones of a younger person, which seemed to have been a woman, upon which was made a very ingenious conjecture : that this might have been the wife who dyed, perhaps at thirty years of age, and who might have been buried till her husband dyed, and when this happened her bones might been collected into this bag, and laid at his feet in the same grave.

“What was something odd, in examining a piece of the bag to see whether it was made of a vegetable or animal substance I discovered it full of a species of insects called, by Linnacus, Dermestes. These, together with the bag, were reduced to a blackish mass, which might be reduced to powder between the fingers, but the warp and woof of the latter, as well as the entire shape of the insects, might easily be traced. There can be little said as to the antiquity of this, only that it has been before the introduction of Christianity. I shall be glad of your thoughts as to which of the northern nations this may be attributed.”

Mr Low was now also in correspondence with Mr Pennant, as we learn from the following letter of Pennant's to Mr Paton :—

“DEAR SIR,—An hour after my last letter went, one came from your friend, Mr Low, of Orkney, which pleased me much, to offer his service freely, and, I dare say, it will be of vast use. He speaks of a treatise of his that is soon to reach you. He permits me to have any extracts, which I shall be happy to have when it reaches you. . . . If Mr Low's treatise is worth publishing, I shall assist chearfull.—I am, Dear Sir, truly yours,

“J. PENNANT.

“*December 24th, 1772.*”

In subsequent letters to Mr Paton, Pennant speaks with approval of Mr Low's plan of visiting the Isles, and states that he longs for his answer. On 16th March, 1773, he says :—

. . . "Mr Low favoured me with an useful list of the animals of Orkney. I read his MS. with pleasure: sent him my opinion and advice; and engaged, when he has taken a little more time about it, to make the best bargain I can for him with a bookseller." . . .

On 15th April, 1773, Mr Low wrote to Mr Paton as follows:—

. . . "Lest the former letters should not come to hand, allow me to give you the substance of them, which was some corrections in the manuscript which I sent up, and which I shall now have an opportunity of amending, as both you and Mr Pennant encourage me to go on and bring it to some order, and assure me of your good offices in promoting and forwarding it, I shall chearfully set about enlarging both the natural history and the antiquities, &c., and illustrating these by drawings, some of which are already done. I am sensible that I labour under great difficulties, especially in the latter, having never made antiquities very much my study, and not having the least opportunity of perusing any book here which might give me any assistance in disentangling them; however, in it I am hopeful I may be helped, as Mr Pennant has promised to add any notes necessary to illustrate it, and I dare say you will not be backward to do the same; I rejoice at the mention of these hints you mention, and beg the favour to peruse them by all means. If it were possible to get a look of any book on the northern antiquities, it might be of great service, but this is not to be got here.

"I lately had two very obliging and kind letters from Mr Pennant, and have answered them to the best in my power, and shall take every opportunity to serve my very good friends in what may be most remarkable here.

. . . "Your communicating my letter to your friend of the Antiquarian Society I esteem as an honour, and, to proceed from your good opinion of me however undeserved. I shall soon either place the proper drawings in my manuscript, together with the description, or if you want a drawing made for your friend, you may expect it in the next box.

"Any antient inscriptions which may come in my way shall be faithfully copied and sent, but I am affraid none are very antient here."

In his next letter, which is dated 30th April of the same year, he refers to the laborious and irksome nature of

his daily duties, and laments the want of time to prosecute his favourite study:—

. . . “I have indeed, as you observe, been very busy collecting (what I could) materials and specimens, and making out catalogues of our Orkney *naturalia* for Mr Pennant, who encourages me to go on, and is to contribute his assistance. I lately got a stuffed skin of an Embergoose and some others, and when I get a few sea fowls, which I have bespoke in Hoy, shall send up the cargo.

“I am obliged to you for the antient ring, upon which I have been breaking my brains (to very little purpose I doubt), for I declare myself totally unacquainted with these things. In return for this I have nothing else at present to present you with but the inscription on the stone in the church wall of Birsa, which writers have made such a noise about: \* one telling us it has the “name Belus engraven on it in antient characters:” another goes farther, and informs us “the Effigies of this Belus is engraven on a stone in the church of Birsa;” both notions, in my opinion, equally ridiculous. You are much better acquainted with these things than I am, and I dare say will be of opinion that these characters are neither very antient, nor have any respect to Belus, but are part of an inscription which has suffered so much thro’ the injuries of time as to be rendered unintelligible. The stone has been broke, as may be seen, thro’ an S, after which 3 points, then follows the so much famed (not Belus), but Bellus, as the figure shews. Your thoughts will be very acceptable.

“I had almost forgot; this figure shews the whole contained on the stone, and proves Martin’s story has proceeded from a misinformation.

“I only wanted to know the price of the Book of Insects, mentioned in my last, because I have (I am afraid) been much overcharged for a copy; however, if you have anything that would assist on the subject, which you could spare the use of, it would oblige me much, and should be thankfully returned. I rejoice that you have obliged me with Sibbald, which will be of vast service, and shall be taken great care of; he, I have been told, gives (especially) a fine account of *cetaceous fishes* round the coasts, many of which we have here.

“I have been lately taking observations and drawings of the Circles of Stones for my tract, and design as minute enquiry as I can concerning them, and the single ones to be found scattered thro’ the

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\* Wallaco. Martin, Desc. West Isles, p. 358

country, some of which are surprisingly large. You shall have a more perfect account of the graves, with drawings, in next box. I have dispersed your letters, but with what success I cannot say. Our Clergy seem to be lazy; I wrote that if they inclined to favour you they might direct their remarks to me, and I would forward them with care. I hope by this time you have got Torfæus, together with Linnæus, which I humbly beg your acceptance of, as Mr Banks gave me another copy, which rendered two superfluous.

Dr. Sir, you perhaps imagine I have much time to prosecute our favourite study, but this is far from being the case; I am engaged in a very labourious task, teaching a parcel of children, which oftentimes takes me so up that I am unfit for the other, but yet I shall always see and get as much spare time as shew my inclination to serve my friends, and hope in time, thro' influence in our great man, Sir Laurence, to be placed in a situation as will afford me a little more leisure to prosecute this study, in my opinion, so consonant to the life of a Clergyman."

Mr Pennant was still urging him to undertake a tour through the islands. He writes to Mr Paton as follows:—

*"May 15th, 1773.*

. . . "I rejoice that Mr Low has got my books, being sure he will make good use of them. I do my best to stimulate him to visit Shetland, which will complete the history of our isles. When you write to him, beg he would collect the eggs of the arctic gull, and observe how many they lay. . . .

"I think Mr Low should know what papers relate to Orkney in the Advocates' Library."

In his next letter to Mr Paton, Mr Low refers to the impossibility of his visiting the Shetland Islands in company with Mr Aberdeen, a friend of Mr Paton's, as had been proposed by Mr Paton and Mr Pennant. He also indicates that he was still at work enlarging his Historical Account of the Orkneys, and requests for that purpose that Mr Paton's copy of Torfæus should be sent back to him.



“STROMNESS, June 4th, 1773.

. . . “I am happy that I can now send you a few more specimens of birds that I thought I should have had, as I lately settled a correspondence with the Rockmen of the Hoy, who sent me over several kinds of birds and eggs. I would have sent these up before now but have had no opportunity; there was, indeed, a ship from Stromness with slate, but the Captn. thought to touch at Fort George, or any other place between and Leith, and if he could sell his slate not proceed, so that I could not put them on board him on such an uncertainty, but shall the first opportunity with other things I have got.

“The drawing for the graves is made, and, together with what I can add, shall be sent. If a drawing of the Circles of Stones has not yet been seen by you, shall copy that made for myself and send it.

“As to the papers you speak of, I can get no account of them, and indeed labour under many disadvantages, for I don't find the country very communicative or ready to help; the antient records are all carried off, or not here to be found; all (or most) of the Acts of Parliament relative to the transactions concerning Orkney are unprinted, especially anent the forfeiture of the Sinclairs, and the annexation of Orkney to the Crown; those relative to the forfeiture of the Stewarts, and the Ratification of the contract between his Majesty and Sir John Arnot, *temp.* K. James 6, together with the again annexation; the papers relative to the famous transaction between the King and the Bishop, concerning the Bishop Lands of Orkney; but particularly the Act of annexation in 1669, which I am told explains our different holdings, likewise a book or pamphlet called “*General Grievances of the Islands of Orkney and Schetland*,” printed an. 1750, which I hear explains the constitution of the Orkneys from the time of the Danes and something before; none of all these are to be found here, and what is I find them not very willing to give, selfish! A number of people in this world think knowledge of any particular once gone from them is no longer to be reckoned knowledge. Mr M'Kenzie could have no acquaintance of me, as it is not seven years since I came to these Isles, and he has been much more from them. It's a pity he cannot be brought to publish what he knows of the antiquities, as he is as well acquainted with them as any man, having, I am told, had the opportunity of records from Danemark for the purpose of searching into them; and his brother's survey of the country is very exact and good. The hint concerning the Pechtæ and the Pietis being confounded by our Scottish historians, I should be glad to see pursued, as it in some measure confirms my opinion concerning the first inhabitants of this country. If convenient, should be glad to see the two vols. of Dr

Piercy's translation of the Northern Antiquities, I should certainly find hints in it might set me right in many particulars. I am, indeed, vexed I sent up Torfaeus, but then had no thought of entering so far into things, and besides considered the book had been long out of your possession ; I can, indeed, scarce ask it again, and yet it would be very assisting, especially with regard to the succession of the Counts and Bishops, and the transactions between the kings of Danemark and Scotland about the alienation of Orkney and Schetland. If it accompanied Piercy, I should only think myself farther bound in a debt I shall already never be able to discharge.

"I heartily wish Mr Aberdeen all success in his Schetland Tour, as it is simply impossible for me at present to visit these parts ; hereafter this may be done, but just now I am as much chained to the oar as any Galley slave, and can scarce command a day or two in twelve-month.

"The method I propose in the Natural History is to make a sort of tract of it, and throw it by itself into the end of the work, as by this means it will not interrupt or interfere with anything else. The particular method : first to give names of the Beast, Bird, &c., with references to the authors I have had an opportunity to consult, with the Orkney names ; then a description afterwards, what I can, of the manners, instincts, way of life, or any remarkable particulars pertaining thereto recorded by authors, or observed by myself, &c., &c.

"I cannot positively promise the Schetland Shells, as we have so very little correspondence with that country as would render this very precarious. I never saw but one of these large muscles in Orkney, in which was three or four small brown pearls. Oysters are found very large in Walls, but in no great quantity ; they are found in more plenty in Deersound, Bay of Quanterness, &c., thro' the Orkneys ; are dear (considering), sell for 1s., or 1s. 4*d.* per Hundd.

"An account of the MSS. in the Advocates' Library will be very acceptable."

Meanwhile Mr Pennant was encouraging Mr Low by getting some of his drawings engraved. He writes to Mr Paton as follows:—

*" June 6th, 1773.*

"DEAR SIR,—I have sent Mr Low an answer, and a set of his prints, that he may show his friends that something is going on for him. I wish Mr Elliot would fix on his own bookseller, Mr Cadel,



who is able and eminent in his profession. As to the prints, I imagine they will not cost so much as I said: perhaps they may come under £50, as many will be guinea or two guinea plates only. . . . I think some friend should recommend Mr Low for the patronage of Sir L. Dundas. He wishes to dedicate the work to me. But I think Sir L. the proper person, and one who may serve him better. . . . Has Mr Gough read Mr Low's MS.?"

Mr Low's next letter to Mr Paton is almost exclusively devoted to a description of the ancient modes of burial he had observed in the Orkneys:—

“STROMNESS, *June 18th, 1773.*

“DEAR SIR,—According to your desire I send you a drawing of the ancient graves found in the Orcades.

“These figures were taken from some opened in the Links of Skail, on the mainland, but similar ones are to be found scattered thro' many of the other Isles, and in different places of the mainland.

“The dissection of the second figure of the drawing is as follows:—The Corpse has been laid down on a bed of sand (in others sometimes on a large stone, or even on the ground), inclosed with four large stones by way of coffin, over which, as a cover, is placed a fifth; round this, as the figure shews, is built a number of common rough stones, and over all a heap of sand, shaped like a flat cone; which is the appearance they have to the eye. The measures of several which had been opened I took: Length, 4 feet within the stone; Breadth,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet; Depths, unequal, mostly about 2 feet more or less. The surrounding stones were squared with a tool, tho' but rudely, but no urn or burnt bones to be found; the skeletons entire, as mentioned in my former letter on this subject, laid in no determinate posture, some being found sitting, and others lying on their sides, as I mentioned before. The dimensions of the bones were large; I have added a representation of a thigh bone, measuring 19 inches, from these graves, and from which the stature of the person it belonged to may in some measure be ascertained by those more knowing in anatomy than I can pretend to be.

“I never heard of any kind of relique found in any of these in the Links of Skail, such as coins, arms, fibulæ, &c., except in one where a great number of beads, of the shape represented in the drawing, were discovered. These were made up so as to be worn about the neck, with a lozenge (I am told, for I did not see this part) shaped

ornament depending, but which was broke in taking up. I have seen several of the beads, they are black, and seem to be made of a sort of cannel coal, they burn well, emitting a strong white flame, and a white ciuder remains. Wallace takes notice of a Danish battle ax being found, in a grave similar to these, in the Links of Tranabie, but I never heard or observed any other example, except the above.

“The front figure represents a very large tumulus in the same place, which contains many repositories in rows above one another. These are something different from the former, being composed of six stones (one serving for a bottom), and without these large ones built round the others, having here nothing but sand. In these were found skeletons of men, women and children, particularly one scull with the second set of foreteeth yet in the sockets ; and what this last circumstance indicates I shall endeavour to shew in course.

“The other figures at a greater distance are the outward appearance of the tumuli.

“These are the methods of burial among the former inhabitants of the Orkneys, but with some variation, e.g., in Hoy I observed one which was broken up, where the corpse had been placed upon a stratum of sea shells, with another laid over it ; the whole enclosed with the usual four stones. Likewise, in the same island, a large tumulus was digged up in which was found a skeleton without a head, but this was found carefully set round with stones in the churchyard ; for this last they have a tradition that the body, &c., were those of a chief of one the northern shires who fell here, and was buried as described.

“There is no great doubt but these are to be attributed to the Norwegians while possessors of the country, and probably before the introduction of Christianity into the Orkneys. Some imagine they are the places where the dead were laid upon the conclusion of the bickerings among the chiefs of old ; however, there are several circumstances against this opinion ; 1st, The tumuli seem to have been constructed with great deliberation, and without that hurry which usually happens at the end of a battle, and is exemplified in a place called Summerdale, where there is an account of a battle having been fought between the Counts of Caithness and Orkney ; in the latter, the bodies (many of which are found to this day) are thrown down without order or distinction into pits, without coffin, and few of them with a shroud.\* Here they are laid in order, the bones of the former

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\* Last year a corpse was found in this place wrapt in a cloth, which, by the action of the moss water, was preserved as if in a tan pit ; and was probably one of the chiefs.

inhabitant of each tomb being gathered together and carefully wrapt up. (*Vide* my former on this subject.)

“2dly, In the seat of war we seldom meet with any but the bones of men; but here (as was said) we find those of men, women and children; young, old, and middle-aged, with all their members entire, and none of their bones fractured or mutilated, as I have seen some discovered in like places in the south country, which were undoubtedly Danish, from the time of their invasions of Scotland.

“Whether there were ever any real urns found in Orkney I much doubt, rather believe not, because our people call these urns, than which nothing can be more different. Wallace, indeed, pictures a sort of urn, but his description does not agree with the Roman urns; and I have never heard of any, even of the kind described by him, being again found, nor am I satisfied that it was burnt bones that might have been found in his, for I myself was very lately assistant at the opening of one of these described before, in which we found only a few ends of bones, such as the heads of the bones and of the joints, &c., mixed with a blackish earth, which looked as if burnt, but upon a closer examination proved only the bones mouldered down and mixed with a sort of vegetable stuff, in which it is probable the body had been wrapt up in, or laid on, and which by length of time was fallen down to the earth of that colour.

“There have, indeed, in some hillocks been found quantities of matter like kelp or scoriæ from the forge, in which are seen mixed pieces of bones, but whether human or not I cannot determine; these, however, had no inclosure of stones, and were only laid in heaps and covered with earth.

“Perhaps Mr Hepburn can give you a better account of these last, as I am told he saw some of them open’d, and had some bitts of the matter in his possession.”

Writing again to Mr Paton from Stromness, on 10th July, he says:—“You have really made me happy by giving me a look of Mallet, at least as happy as a slave can be, however *tempora mutantur*. I was once not so much so, and may be free again.”

Mr Pennant writes to Mr Paton, on the 9th July, that he is “glad to hear that Mr Low goes on so well,” and adds, “it shall be my business to get his work printed in a

handsome way.” His next letter to Mr Paton indicates the maturity of the plan which he had previously hinted at, of sending Mr Low to Shetland to gather material for a description of these Islands, which was to supplement the Tour in Scotland. Writing on 13th October, 1773, he says:—

. . . “I wish much that Mr Low had *Saxo Grammaticus*, for with that is printed Torfæus’s history of the Orcaes. I will lend him mine if not be got; also Olaus Magnus, which treats much of northern nations. I shall soon write to him again to urge his visit next summer to the Shetlands, on terms I hope he will not decline. Those isles should go with the others to complete our plan.”

And again, on 27th October, he says:—

. . . “Mr Low must not think of leaving Orkney next spring, for to the Shetlands he must go if I can prevail. I propose (self & Co.) to advance a small sum equal to such a little voyage. I have written to him.” . . .

Mr Low, writing to Mr Paton shortly afterwards, intimates his acceptance of Mr Pennant’s offer, and says that he is keen for the Shetland trip:—

“STROMNESS, 4th November 1773.

“SIR,—The late coming in of the post, by bad weather, hindered me from writing you last week, but hope by this time you have Mr Clouston’s description of his parish. I send you Mr Irvine’s inclosed, and shall stimulate the rest.

“What return shall I make for all your kindness? I know not, every week gives me fresh proofs of them, both by yourself and friends. Mr Pennant has wrote me anent the Schetland jaunt, and I have determined to accept it, as indeed I could go to the end of the world to serve men who are so obliging, especially in an affair in which my own turn is so agreeably flattered. I was lately at Skeal, and have got specimens of the figured stones, as also a promise of every

curious bird Mr Graham, younger, can procure. Miss Graham will stuff them, and she is very dextrous.

"I have also a few Ores, as indeed the country does not produce many; these with the first occasion. I go next week to try what I can make out with relation to the mummies of Stroma and of Walls, which you shall hear of. I lately heard of an earthen urn being found in a hillock, I know not if Roman, as I have not yet got a sight of it, but indeed do not think the Romans staid long enough in the country to leave many relicts behind them; am to search in several near that place to see if we can find any more. Wallace came in since I began to this letter; his plants will be assisting, tho' I think there are several not to be found, as I have catalogues made by different people, and at different seasons. I am very much obliged to you for the former extracts, which shall find a place with due honour. I wrote Mr Watt, but as yet have received no answer. We shall have time enough to concert measures how to make the Schetland scheme most effectual, as I am not done in the family till April."

"STROMNESS, 10th Dec. 1773.

"SIR,—Your very agreeable favour just came to hand about an hour ago, together with one from Mr Pennant, who is keen for the Schetland trip, and indeed no fonder than I am. I have not Brand and shall be happy to receive it, or any thing else you think can make the project succeed. Surely Saxo or Olaus Magnus would be of vast service in such a scheme as this, and no doubt the small copy may; you will be a better judge, as I have never seen it. I shall let Miss Graham know your respect for her, and from her known character hope for a return; she has had, for some time past, my copy of the British Zoology, and is no mean scholar in natural history. Every bird, &c., I have described has the names given it by several of the best authors in several countries, and where they are to be found, the Orkney name likewise. I have procured several kinds of iron ore, but in no specimen could I ever find the least magnetic virtue.

"I never hear with any certainty of any Roman coins, or even Danish, dug up here. I have been told a gentleman found several Roman coins at a place in Shapinsha called Grugalty, said to be so called from the loss of one of Agricola's ships there; however, I something doubt the truth of the relation, having never met with any one that saw any of them. Miss Graham has part of a larger number of beads, which were dug up from one of the barrows I formerly mentioned, and this is the only thing of the kind I have heard of being got from them, except a battle ax said to be met with in the lauds of



Tranaby, in Westra. The beads are made of a sort of Lithandrax or Parrot coal, and burn in a candle leaving white ashes after a very bright white flame. I am afraid I cannot much depend upon Wallace's plants, as there are many of them I much doubt are not to be found here, tho' I shall not be rash in judging till I see farther. I have often been looking for petrifications, but can find none. *Echini Marini*, or *Evigars*, are found in vast numbers round the coasts, and many of them very large; I have one about 7 inches diameter, and that was none of the biggest, but by drying the prickles have all fallen off; they are to be got at low spring tides in plenty. Amber or amber grease comes so seldom in here that I cannot say I have had an opportunity of seeing either of them here."

Mr Pennant writes to Mr Paton, on December 11th, that he hopes "Mr Low is fixed," and promises to send him all the notices he can. On the 24th of the same month he writes:—

. . . "I am very glad to hear, both from you and Mr Low, that he proceeds with such spirit. I wish he had some book that would instruct him in perspective, for I would fain have him make all the drawings he can of places that may never again be visited by the curious traveller." . . .

Writing to Mr Paton, on 22nd December, 1773, Mr Low refers to some of the rarer birds of Orkney, and the superstition of Elf-shots:—

. . . "That the Tyste is seen grey in winter is indisputable; you may remember I sent you a specimen of both black and grey, however I have my own doubts whether it is not the young brood that remain in that colour till spring, like many other sea fowl which do not acquire their true colour for the first season; but it is another fact, or at least I have not observed any of the black ones in the dead of winter, so that I think we may reasonably conjecture they really change their colour from black to a mottled black and grey.

— "As to the King's-fisher, I found one some years ago upon a sea-rock, but so fatigued that it could not escape; as far as I know, it is not a native of Orkney, but like many other birds is sometimes driven in here by stress of weather; the same may be said of the Water Rail,

of which I have seen a specimen or two in the autumn forced in here, but at no other time of the year.

"As to Woodcocks, I have not heard with any certainty of any here; the best places for them are down about the hills of Holm, and there I was told of one or two shot, but the bird is so little known here, and I did not see these, that I cannot condescend whether 'twas a Woodcock or not. What makes me more sceptick here is, I had given orders to look for a Woodcock, and if possible get me one, as I was assured they built here, but the bird that was brought proved nothing than a lesser kind of Curlew, found frequently enough here.

"Have you seen any Elfshots, as they are called? \* Surely you have. I have met with several of them here, and many a dismal tale of the effects of them, and their pretended uses. I indeed have not heard with Sir Robert Sibbald's author of their being found in a boot top, or the fold of a coat, but an honest gentleman (in other things, little given to scruples) affirmed he heard one of them rattle after him on his stairs, which he picked up! So firmly is the belief of Fairies implanted among the country people that it will be a very difficult matter to persuade them from it. A right shrewd farmer told me he observed on a know ealled Burying† (a heap of ruins), near his house in Harray, on a Christmas day, a large company dancing and frolicking, but upon his walking up they all disappeared. He was very ill pleased when I attempted to persuade him it could be nothing but the effects of the cakes and strong ale he had for his Christmas breakfast (the eustom here).

"Anything you think will be assisting the plan in hand, or anything relative to Schetland, will be highly acceptable and thankfully returned; if *Olavs* contains anything, I should beg a look of it, or *Arngrim*, or Keysler's *Ant. Septentrionales*. Have you Stuckly's Stonhenge?

"I hope soon to have the pleasure to spend an agreeable hour (I am sure it will be to me) with you in Edinburgh. I mean when I come from Schetland. In the meantime, I am, Sir, your most obedt. servant,

"GEORGE LOW."

Again, on 2nd February, he confides to his friend, Mr Paton, his intentions with regard to the tour:—

\* Flint arrow-heads.

† This mound has been explored, and is now known as the Broch of Burrian, in Harray.



. . . “I have a vast inclination to make out everything possible to illustrate our antiquities, as the Scottish historians have said so very little on the subject, and that so vague. Little, indeed, can be found here; records we have none worth speaking of, and indeed so little attentive are we here to anything but smuggling gin, that I am informed some years ago, in demolishing the castle, the workmen broke into a large vault in which a vast number of papers were deposited, which upon inspection proving not to be *bank notes*, were consigned to the schoolboys, when very possibly they were the Earl’s or Bishop’s records, and contained the ancient history of the country.

“Our views in Orkney are not so romantick as elsewhere, no woods nor waters, bridges or castles, to improve the scene. Mr Penant shall have specimens as they are. I shall be sure to make drawings of every remarkable bird, fish, plant, or antiquity, which can serve to illustrate the history of the Orcades and Schetland. I hope my natural history will be much augmented in the latter, especially in Foula and the Fair Isle, which, I dare say, numbers of birds frequent not to be found in Orkney.”

And on the 7th of the same month he says:—

. . . “I am very sorry for the want of Mr Aberdeen’s assistance, as it surely would have been very advantageous, especially as to the nature of the people of Schetland, but this may in some measure be made up by his written instructions, which I hope he’ll be so obliging as send. As to the topography of the country, I defy them to cheat me, as I shall visit every littlest isle; the same may be said of the natural history, and for anything else I depend upon the friendship of Messrs Ross, in Orkney, his influence with his acquaintance in Schetland—Mr James Sands, with whom I am intimately acquainted, and where my *headquarters* is to be—and Mr William Balfour, to whom I shall take care to be well recommended; but, not only these, I shall likewise have letters of recommendation for the clergy, who, *with spurs*, may be assisting.

“What you kindly promise from Mr Aberdeen will likewise help. I take my departure from Stromness the last week of April; take a trip thro’ the South Isles of Orkney for a fortnight or 3 weeks, then sail from Holm with sloop for Schetland. I visit every isle there and Foula, and take the Fair Isle and what of the North Isles I have not seen in my return. I shall certainly require the assistance of a lad to carry anything necessary, as I am not very strong myself; I think to get a young lad with me for a trifle from the Orkneys. When I need

to employ Rockmen, or others to examine any grave or other antiquity, these must be employed where they are to be found. However, if you can propose a better method, I shall be happy to follow it.

“You are sensible I must see all ranks, to view the economy of the country where I am going; I am determined, however, to have no farther correspondence than is necessary to investigate what I came upon. The little parties and griefs I shall take no notice of, and shall take particular care to be unbiassed by them. However, under this head cannot come the following particulars—to lay open after description the defects in agriculture, arts, or manufactures, with a view to point out the method of cure; to set the laziness that so much prevails in Orkney (with regard to fishing particularly), in contrast with the industry that may be found elsewhere. Matters of dispute in politicks, or between the superior and vassals, I shall not meddle much with, as they must disgust.

“Happy am I that you take so much pains in so favourable a scheme; it is a good omen for its succeeding. Mr Pennant’s anxiety must not be disappointed, at least as far as human foresight can prevail.”

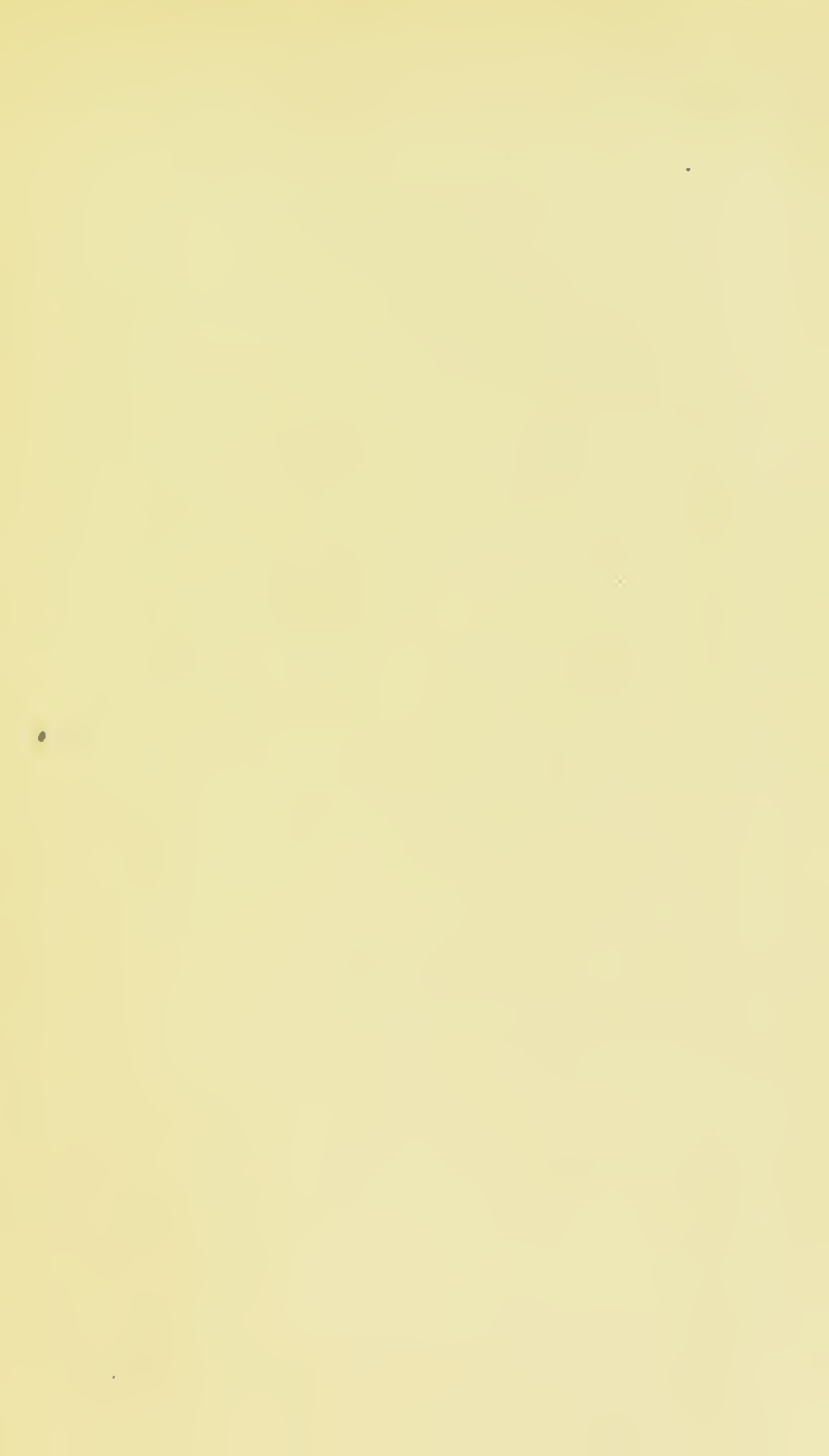
Meanwhile Mr Pennant writes to Mr Paton under date of the 9th February, anxiously inquiring when Mr Low is to “begin his voyage,” and enclosing a print for him “as a model for his drawing tombs.” On the 18th of the same month, he adds, for Mr Low’s encouragement, that he has reason to think that “his History will sell well.”

Writing Mr Paton in March, Mr Low gives a list of the Drawings which he has prepared to illustrate his History:—

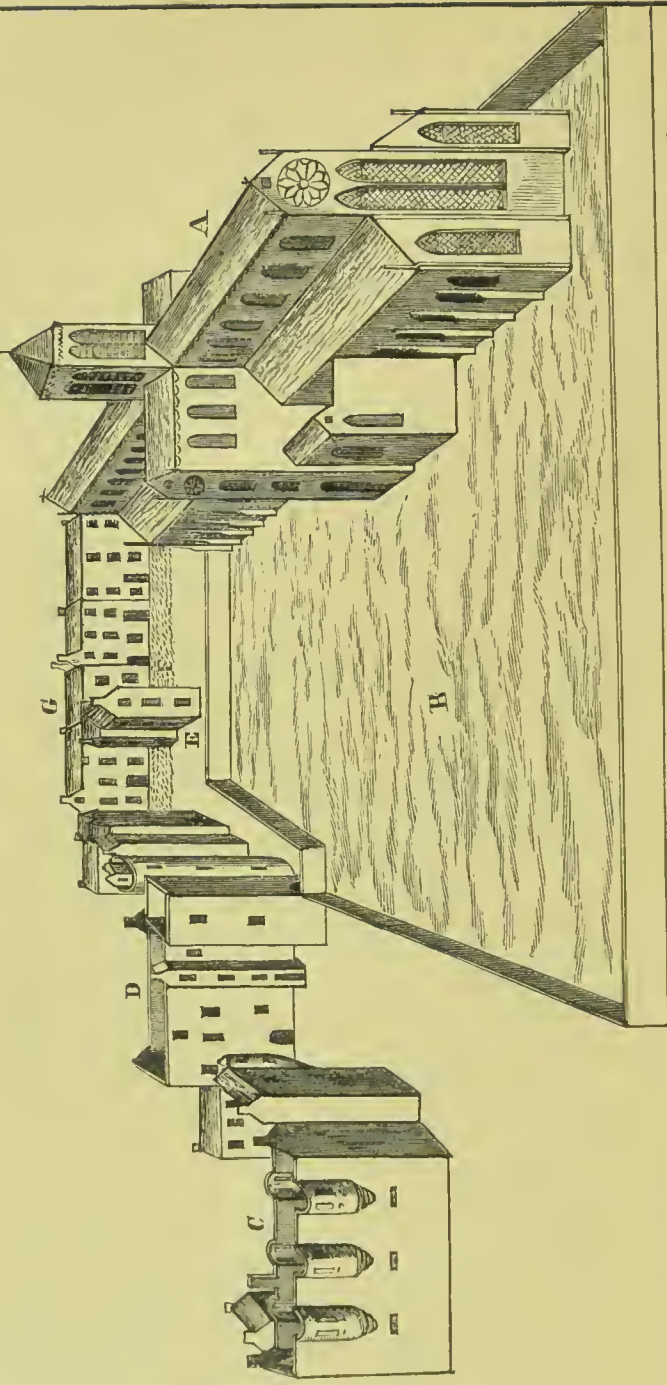
“STROMNESS, 10th March 1774.

. . . “I have the promise of a book from a friend to keep my journal on, which I intend shall be very regular: the one page to contain the topography of the isles, &c., with notes of the natural history, antiquities, curiosities, &c. The other a meteorological journal, and what else pertains to the elements; and from these materials what may be published is to be compiled. The following are the drawings already sketched out:—

“1, Standing Stones Circle, with the Tumuli adjacent; 2. Do., the Semicircle; 3, Ancient Graves; 4, Perspective view of Hoy-head,



*A perspective View of the Kirk of Kirkwall, and the Houses adjacent*



*A, the Kirk, B, the Kirk Yard, C, Carls Palace, D, Bishops Palace, E, the Town House of Kirkwall  
F the Street of Kirkwall, G, part of the Houses of Kirkwall*

and the country, sounds, &c.; 5, Palace of Birsa, from the west; 6, Dwarfie Stone; 7, Figured Stones; 8, Bellus, &c., &c., in one paper, Barnacles, Fibulæ; 9, the Great Northern Diver, and Immer Goose; 10, Basking Shark; 11, Torsk Fish; 12, View between the Hills of Hoy; 13, Sea Views: Maps of Sanda, &c., because all or most writers have misrepresented them; 14, very many Plants, some new British Plants, others not sufficiently described.

“There are several others in Orkney that I have not yet been able to overtake, owing to their lying at a distance: as the church and palace of Kirkwall; a tomb there; the inscription of the bells; views of Orkney from all sides by sea, for the use of seamen; several perspective views to be found thro’ the country; Pight’s houses, views and plans of; besides many other things which may cast up thro’ the country and Zetland.

“I am just now looking out for Molluca Beans, Arrowheads, Coins, &c.; have been pretty lucky in the two former. The old papers were found in a vault of the Castle of Kirkwall, and are many years ago irrecoverably lost. Pray, has not your friend perhaps something mistaken the words of the historian with respect to the black and white lead (*Plumbum album et nigrum*, Buch. Hist.)? may not we rather understand them lead and tin? I, indeed, have never heard of black lead or ‘Wadd’ to be found here, but common lead in many places; shall, however, make very strick enquiry about it. Copper to be found; shall procure specimens of beautifully sprigged ore from Burra.

“I beg to know what the white stuff was I sent? it is found *in vein* thro’ the rocks of the mainland. I shall not write Mr Pennant till I hear from him from London; I have a few notes about the weight, and some varieties of birds to send him.

“I shall be here yet about 40 days, and in that time trip about to make a map of the ground where the circles of stones are; and if I can get the length of Evie to take a Pight’s house, but indeed Mr Graham keeps my nose very well to the grindstone, tho’ upon the whole I believe I am no truant to him.

“If convenient, should be glad to see the drawing No. 1st, ‘View of the Kirk of Kirkwall, with the houses adjacent.’ I want to take into mind the schools, part of the palace, and of the town house; and if I can be so far a proficient as take an inside view.”

Mr Pennant writes to Mr Paton, on April 28th, 1774, that to his great comfort Mr Low’s draft upon him for the expenses of his voyage had just arrived. He had written a



few days before expressing his vexation at not hearing of it, fearing "lest it should prove an inconvenience to Mr Low."

We learn from Mr Low's journal that he left Stromness on the 4th May, 1774, and went to Græmsay. Thence he passed over to Hoy on the 5th, and on the 9th he took boat from Walls to Stroma, repassing the Pentland Firth to Flotta in the evening. The 10th May was spent in Flotta, and on the 11th and 12th he examined Swona and South Ronaldshay, crossed to Burray on the 13th, and thence to Hunda on the 16th. After spending a day or two among the adjacent islets he passed to Holm, on the Mainland of Orkney, where he was detained for eight days by bad weather. Proceeding to Kirkwall, by Deerness, he sailed for Shetland on the 17th June, arriving in Lerwick on the 19th. His first letter to Mr Paton is dated from Walls, in Shetland, on the 4th July:—

. . . "Since my arrival in Zetland have made a good many discoveries, both as to the ancient and modern history of it; have seen several pieces of ancient stone weapons, and some entire, particularly a sort of ax, resembling the ax of a halbard, made of marble, which Sir John Mitchell shewed me, and which I am in hopes to obtain, or at least the use of it for yours, and my other friends' inspection; likewise, what I imagine to have been sacrificing tools or knives, made too of marble found here, &c., &c. Elf Arrowheads I have got a few in Orkney, but none here.

"Muscles very large, but Oysters nothing extraordinary; shall give specimens with the pearls. The largest at the head of Bixter voe.

"In Foula got some specimens of the Norn language to exercise the skill of the *literati* upon. Also, the bird Skua, a very fierce kind of gull, which beat me most heartily before I got it shot; refer you for other particulars to my journal.

"Find the gentlemen and clergy very obliging, willing to give what assistance is in their power, Capt. Craigie particularly so.

"I sent, sometime ago, a packet of sea weeds as a specimen (which I hope is now come to hand), by Mr Lindsay from Kirkwall.



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“Find not so great a variety of new birds in Schetland as I imagined ; also a great addition to my plants. A good deal of additions will be made to my history of particular fishes.”

In all probability this letter was sent on to Mr Pennant, who writes to his friend, Mr Paton, on the 15th July, that he rejoices greatly at the prospect of Mr Low's success. On his return from Shetland, Mr Low writes to Mr Paton from Holm, in Orkney, as follows :—

. . . “I should not have hastened myself from Schetland, as there was no danger for time ; but, having done my business, and settled correspondences with several worthy and knowing gentlemen, who are to let me know what new may occur, I took the opportunity of what I suppose will be the last boat for Orkney of the season. I proposed to touch at Fair Isle in my way to Orkney, but we had such stormy weather that we durst not come near it, so it must be deffered for some time. I have pick't up a number of matters, several stone weapons, and antiquities of brass\* ; met with a single Roman coin in good preservation, with many others of different nations, tho' but few very ancient.

“The minerals I have seen are lead, poor copper, and an iron ore so pure as to draw the mariner's compass like a loadstone ; of these have specimens.

“You was right anent the Oysters' shells ; a few such large fossil shells were dug up in a sandy brae at Sumburgh, where Mr Bruce, the very obliging proprietor, ordered six of his people to digg for a whole day, but without success ; they seem to have worn out. Mr Bruce has promised, if any are got, to send me them very punctually. I have a parcel of very large Muscle shells, found pretty frequent in Bressay Sound, for you.

“HOLM, IN ORKNEY, 9th [September] 1774.”

On the 16th August Mr Pennant, writing to Mr Paton, had expressed a hope that Mr Low might be able “to see the coins, and perhaps to obtain a few.” This must

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\* There is no notice of these in the Tour.

refer to the discovery, in the summer of 1774, of the largest hoard of coins of Canute, or Knut the Great, which had ever been found. Mr Gough published an account of them in a quarto pamphlet, entitled "A Catalogue of the Coins of Canute, King of Denmark and England, with specimens, by Richard Gough, Esq., London, 1777." In it he states that "a tenant of Mr William Lindsay, of Caldale, digging peat for his winter fuel in a moss called Wideford, lying at the bottom of a hill of the same name, hard by Mr Lindsay's house, about two miles from Kirkwall, discovered, about two feet under ground, above three hundred coins, with many silver fibulae, in two cows' horns; and a great quantity of broken pieces of fibulae, amounting to about nine ounces. Many of the coins and fibulae were dispersed before Mr Lindsay was informed of the discovery. The remainder, with three of the fibulae and the two horns, were presented to Thomas Dundas, Esq. of Castleary, son to Mr Laurence Dundas; twelve coins and one fibula were given to Mr George Ross of Pitkerrie. Mr Pennant obtained six of the coins; three were sent to me; some to Dr Hunter; and three to Mr Dalton for His Majesty's cabinet." In one of Mr Low's undated letters to Mr Paton he says, "I have sent a fibula, the last of the Caldale collection I have. Neither a Brownie nor a Brownie's hide can be got; but if you'll want a Fairie, a half-a-score, I believe, I can furnish you, by means of an auld bodie here who has them at command."

Mr Low was presented by Sir Laurence Dundas to the united parish of Birsay and Harray, shortly after his return from his tour in Shetland. Mr Pennant, writing to Mr Paton, thus refers to Mr Low's good fortune:—

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“ DOWNING, *October 9th, 1774.*

“ Your good news was sent after me here, for I left London before its arrival. Pray when you write to Mr Low, express to him my sincere joy; for nothing can equal the happiness I have in hearing of the good fortune of my friends. He will now be settled so as to pursue his plan with ease. I long to hear from him.” . . .

“ DOWNING, *Nov. 11, 1774.*

“ I heard from Mr Low, and hope soon he will be so comfortably settled as to have leisure to enjoy himself, and proceed in his works.”

Mr Low was ordained to the charge of the parish of Birsay and Harray on 14th December 1774. The situation of the parish, which occupies the north-west angle of the Mainland of Orkney, and thus lies out of the track of what little communication was then kept up with the outer world through Kirkwall and Stromness, would scarcely have been agreeable to a candidate for the ministry whose tastes and habits were different from Mr Low's. But in this sequestered region he found himself provided with all the requirements of his simple life. Released from the daily drudgery of teaching, he could now devote himself more fully to his favourite pursuits. The cliffs and bays, the moors and lochs—the earth, the sea, and the air everywhere—offered fresh subjects of observation in connection with the zoology and botany of the islands which he was bent on completing, while the antiquities with which the district is studded gave ample opportunities of indulging his tastes in this direction.

The quaint old drawing which is here reproduced gives a view of Birsay about the time when Mr Low became its minister. The artist is not known, but there is such a close resemblance between the style of this drawing and

that of the Stones of Stennis (given on p. xxiii.), that both may have been the work of the same hand.

Unfortunately no letters of this period are preserved. Mr Low's next communication to Mr Paton is dated from Consgarth, 31st August, 1775:—

. . . “I have been looking for the Butterfly of the nettle, which you expressed a desire to have, but find it very infrequent in this country; you can find it more readily with you. It is red spotted and speckled with black, the spots squares, rhomboids and other figures. The Catterpillar, an ugly blackish worm, lives upon the nettle plant, which it devours most greedily, leaving but the ribs.

“In a conversation with some of your Edinburgh *literati*, I was led to think the peak or wart of Hoy had once been a volcano; however, by a late and very strict search, I cannot discover anything to encourage such a supposition. The whole hill, and particularly round what I supposed the crater, is a mass of freestone, which seems to have undergone no change since first fixed there. No appearance of any lava, nor any place where it may have been supposed to have proceeded from the crater. So that I imagine Hoy has remained in its first state ever since the flood at least.

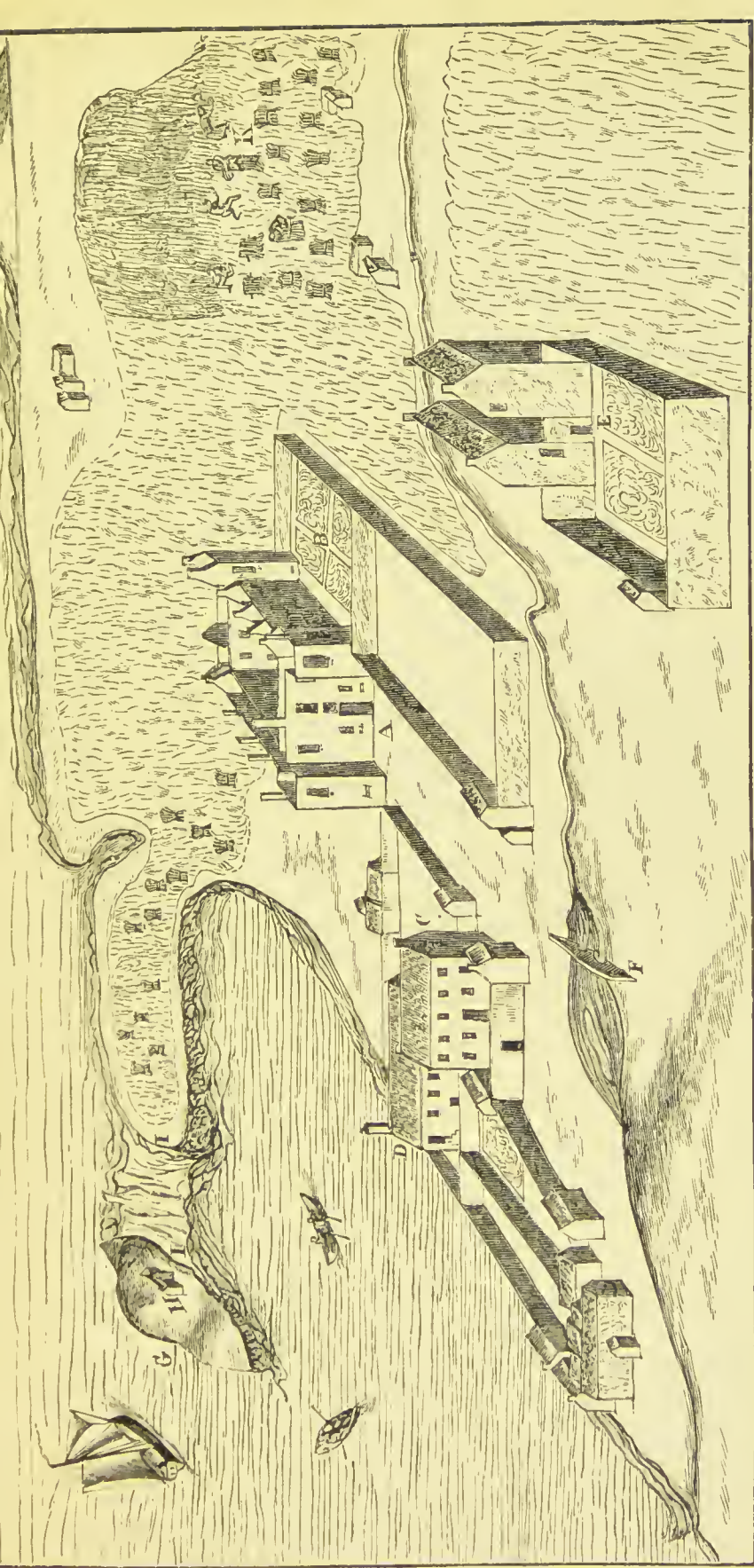
“This year we have the finest crop I ever saw here, and the earliest. The harvest is begun in all places, and half finished in some. Our bear excellent. and oats tolerable.

“Emigration seems not to take such place here as elsewhere. We have had a ship bound for Savannah, in Georgia, waiting here some time, but she does not seem to make out her cargo so readily as expectation. The Schetlanders seem much more in the humour of travail than our Oreadians, notwithstanding their misery at home.

“I have not yet been able to find any weapons of iron in any of our graves, tho' I have of late opened several in different places, and parishes. No stone ones as far as I know, except Elfshot, in Orkney, which is the more remarkable as they are found not infrequent in Schetland. This, with the very different divisions of lands, starts very great difficulty with me with regard to their history. As soon as I can form a proper scheme of queries I shall transmitt them, that you may consult your learned friends, Mr Davidson, &c.; especially Mr Davidson, who seems to be well acquainted with our history, tho' perhaps his notions of some particulars may be erroneous.”

Mr Pennant now becomes anxious to hear of the results





A SOUTH VIEW OF THE EARL'S PALACE IN THE PARISH OF BIRSAY, ORKNEY.

A. Front of the Palace. B. Palace Garden. C. Minister's House. D. The Church. E. Old Manse. F. A Bridge. G. The Brough of Birsay. H. St Come's Church; it is ruinous; there is in the Churchyard here a Grave nine feet long. The Sea runs between I and K. K. are people busy at harvest.





of Mr Low's labours. In November he writes to Mr Paton expressing his wonder at hearing nothing of Mr Low, and hoping he is not ill. Again, he says, "I hope Mr Low is not ill. If his silence results from nuptial engagements, it is venial." In point of fact, Mr Low had been married on 25th August, 1775, to Helen, only daughter of Rev. James Tyrie, minister of Stromness. But he had not abandoned the literary labours for the completion of which Mr Pennant showed such anxiety, and his correspondence with Mr Paton was still kept up. He writes to him on 29th Nov., 1775:—

. . . "The pitchy rock I spoke of formerly does not emitt its contents in a spring, it exudes them by the heat of the sun, and when we break a piece of the rock we see the matter standing in drops in the crevices and pores ; the matter is fully as thick as pitch.

"As to Mr Tunstall's catalogue, there are many we have not here, *e.g.*, *Larus cephus*, or B. Toed Gull, Fulmar, Scaup Duck, Long-legged Plover, or the Ptarmigan. I say none of these we have ; what of the rest I can procure shall be transmitted first ship. The Kittiwake and Tarrock are the same bird.

"I have observed both the Fieldfares you speak of, at least if the *ash coloured one* be so ; but this last, while with us is so shy that it will not bear the face of a man, but immediately springs aloft and flies at a great height in the air, so that no gun can reach it. Its visits too are very short and accidental. The common Fieldfare is seen in small flocks in Orkney about October, but does not continue the winter, probably for want of food. I remember to have seen them in Angus in November, or before the first snows, in large flocks, where they continue most of the winter.

"The Redwing Thrush I have observed in Hoy, where a *single pair* build in a place called the Burn of Berrydale.

"I have met with no, nor heard of any, human corpses wrapt up in leather, nor do I think there are any such. On the moor where tradition tells us a skirmish happened between the Earls of Caithness and Orkney, called the Battle of Summerdale, a man lately dug up a corpse wrapt in what was judged a linnen cloth, tanned by the moss-water. I have, likewise, heard of bodies found in our mosses rolled up

in their own leather, *i.e.*, their skins and flesh so preserved by a natural tanning that one could observe the very fibres of the museles ; of one woman in Sehetland who had lien about 80 years, the woollen mittens were still preserved by the water in the heathy moss.

“Of natural mummies there were a good many in Stroma, but these are no more ; when I was there the tomb was broke up, and the bodies trampled to pieces. In Walls, likewise, were mummies, but they were buried by a superstitious old woman. These were preserved in the same manner as you have no doubt heard of beef and mutton by skewing, that is by plaicing the body in a situation where the air can get in to absorb the juices, but insects are exeluded ; so that in time the body becomes like a dried Haddock.”

Mr Paton seems to have set Mr Pennant's mind at rest by assuring him of Mr Low's progress with his work, for we find him in December expressing his joy “at the news about Mr Low,” and saying “I do really think he had best send his Natural History part first, that I may have full time to overlook it.” In January 1776 Mr Low was in ill health ; Mr Pennant expresses his sincere regret “for his own sake, and the loss the public will sustain by that of his labours.” In February, however, he had again recovered his wonted health, and writes to Mr Paton as follows:—

“BIRSA, 27th February 1776.

. . . “You may depend upon it there is neither *cement* nor *vitrifaction* in any of our Piets' houses. They are entirely built of dry stone, execept a very few that have the stones bedded in *earth* or *gravel*.

“I eannot explain the method of erusting over with vitrified matter, if not in this manner : possibly the building, being entirely formed of a kind of stone which might not sustain great damage from an intense fire, was plastered over with thistles, thorns, or sea weeds, mixed with sand to give it a body, but finding this not very tenacious at first, they might attempt to harden it by fire, in the same manner as we see the walls of *kelp kilns* entirely covered over with a crust of half formed glass wherever there is the least sand or freestone near the greatest heat of the fire. But this is only conjeecture. However, in all

the works of the ancients, tho' we find rather strength and solidity than a finical neatness consulted, yet we often find such specimens of Art as are sometimes difficult either to account for or imitate.

"I am very happy that the antiquarians go on with such spirit ; if their searches are about matters of consequence, and well descanted on, they may be of vast use to clear up the history of the country. I heartily agree with you, this is the age of temptation !

"With respect to the *Saury*, I have information that such a shoal of them came in about ten miles from this that they might be caught in a small bay by pailfulls ; our sailors called them *Garfish*.

"I shall write Mr Riddoch anent the Seals, or see him soon.

"It is possible the antiquarians have not their ammunition from Mr Banks, tho' he has a fine drawing of the *Stones of Stenness*. I remember I was solicited some time ago by several gentry for a drawing and description, thoughts, &c., to be sent up to an *English gentleman*, without name, but this at that time I declined for the same reason that I now would. I indeed have a drawing, plan, and map of the ground, but you know if these are published piece by piece it prevents the use of the whole. The 'particular description' I saw, it contains an account of their number and heights and distances. I indeed think Mr Aberdeen's drawing not very good, and that of the Dwarfy Stone execrable, tho' people would be far from giving a bad character of one who makes planning a part of his method of gaining his bread, or saying anything of the matter.

"I do not think any part of this information could come from Mr Fea, as he did not make any particular inquiries of this nature.

"As to the Coins, they come as well from them as me, or anyone else. I have a variety which seems not the same as the rest. I mind not if I shewed it you in Edinburgh. I think I did. The variety differs both in head and inscription. If at any time it may be needed it is at your service.

"I am almost vexed I did not buy Mr Pennant's two first vols. when I was last at Leith, as I never have been able to get a sight of them.

"I have made an exact drawing of the famous Pight's house in Mousa, with sections shewing the galleries, &c.; with drawings of every variety of these buildings scattered thro' our isles.

"You talk of a severe storm ; I never saw such a one here, it seemed to fall by whole clouds. January 13th, [snow] fell about 18 inches in a few hours, perfect calm, which at length was blown into such holds as stopt all communication here. Mr Lindsay sent your letters by an express, in the end of the storm, after having been obliged to keep them many days.

"I wrote Mr Pennant when with you for a sketch of the brass matters sent up, but never heard about them again ; I suppose from his hurry in publishing.

"I took several views (on my well days), of some of the islands, &c., in time of the snow, which look prettily. I shall add them in the blank leaves of my journal, with the Church of Kirkwall, &c.

"Mr Pennant, I see, adds the history of shells to his British Zoology. I think it is a pity he does not something in Botany ; his engravings be so fine. He sent me some of the engraved shells, really beautiful.

"I know not, upon second thoughts, but Græmsay may have the Bishop's Seal, or at least Charters where it is appended. I shall enquire at all those that hold Bishop's land about this.

"I do not remember if I left you a copy of a Norn ballad, which I got in Foula. I wish you would try if Dr Piercy could make anything of it. If you have no copy I shall send an exact one, as I wrote it at least, tho' I cannot depend on the orthography, as I wrote it from an honest country man's mouth, who could neither read nor write, but had the most retentive memory I ever heard of. He, I am afraid, is by this time dead, as he was then old and much decayed ; but when I saw him he was so much pleased with my curiosity, and now and then a *dram of gin*, that he repeated and sung the whole day.

"I lately had from a young man the enclosed ballad, written from his memory. It looks like antique, and if genuine and not published might be acceptable to Dr Piercy, on account of Shakespear's play founded on the same subject, perhaps on the ballad, or *vice versa*."

In March Mr Pennant indicates to Mr Paton his expectation of receiving Mr Low's manuscript as follows:—

"If anything come from Mr Low, let it come to me only, without passing thro' other hands, for I will take it very ill to have anything anticipated after all my expenses and pains.

"*March 10th, 1776.*"

"I rejoice at Mr Low's recovery, and at the arrival of his MS. I enclose a line to him. . . . Mr Low may mention anything *historically*, but without entering into one party or another. Let him avoid controversy.

"*March 26th, 1776.*"

"I am very happy in a letter from Mr Low. I hear he is much restored; but I gave him a strict caution about hazarding his health again by too strict an application.

*"May 24th, 1776."*

From this it would appear that the Natural History had been sent first, according to Mr Pennant's previous suggestion, and that Mr Low was still engaged upon the description and history of the Islands, and so closely occupied with it that Mr Pennant says, in May 1776, that he "gave him a strict caution about hazarding his health again by too strict an application."

But a great sorrow was soon to blight the life of the enthusiastic worker. His young wife died on 2nd Sept., 1776, after giving birth to a still-born child. On the 18th he wrote the following letter to Mr Paton:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letters have all come to hand, but at a time when my spirits were in no condition to answer them.

"Alas, my friend! Friday 29th ultimo, saw me happy in the friendship of a prudent, affectionate, and beloved wife, likely to be a valuable companion for many years to come. Monday saw this jewel a lump of clay; and Thursday I was obliged to blend the very half of my soul with the dust together with our child. I need say no more; you will feel for me. All my happiness in the world is interred with her. In a word, it seems to me an entire waste. When will it be morn in the grave? Home, home! everywhere her beloved shade follows me. A thousand happy circumstances thrust her forward into my imagination, that render day and night restless. I have not (rested!) two of the four and twenty hours since I lost her, which is like to be of the worst consequence to my head, and renders it at times far from clear. But it is next in my heart to say, I am, Dear Sir, yours, &c., &c., while

"GEORGE LOW."

In a postscript to this letter he indicates the probability of his visiting Edinburgh, and Mr Pennant promises in



January that he will write to Mr Low as soon as he hears from Mr Paton that he has arrived in Edinburgh. In the following August Mr Pennant writes to Mr Paton as follows:—

“I beg my best wishes to Mr Low. I beg to have his MS. if ready, and fair, by means of Mr White. Perhaps he may get a scribe in your city. I hope he is concise, for that is what the public admire. I long for his drawings which my servant shall finish this winter.

“DOWNING, *Aug. 8, 1777.*”

“I hope Mr Low has not been prolix : we English love conciseness. . . . Mr Pope long since presented me with the translation of Torfæus, but Mr Low had best use his own.

“DOWNING, *Aug. 29, 1777.*”

Again, in November 1777, he writes acknowledging receipt of Mr Low's manuscript:—

“This week only I received Mr Low's books. The little I have been able to read of them gives much satisfaction. By spring I can thoroughly peruse them.

“*Nov. 7, 1777.*”

Mr Low himself writes to Mr Paton in December of the same year, intimating his intention of proceeding as soon as the weather would permit to Rousay, Westray, Sanday and Stronsay, in order to finish the Orkney tour. This projected tour in the North Isles of Orkney was accomplished by Mr Low, and is alluded to by Mr Pennant, who states in his own “Literary Life” that Mr Low “made his surveys in the years 1774 and 1778.” Quotations from Mr Low's MS. describing the North Isles of Orkney are also given by Mr Gough in his *British Topography*, but the MS. itself is not now known to exist. In his letter to Mr Paton he says:—



"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I had your agreeable favour of the 15th November some days ago, and am very glad the MSS. and drawings are now in Mr Pennant's hands, and are likely to give some satisfaction. I cannot guess at the paragraph you mention, as I never heard of it before from you. I observe your hints. As soon as the weather permits (which has been most boisterous this winter) I set out for Rousa, Westra, Sanda, and Stronsa, that I may finish the Orkney Tour. I am affraid Mr Pennant will not be ready to give either Mr Gough or Dr Cuming a look of my papers, as you know his sentiments on this head already. How happy I am that you are like to get the *Kempe vyser*. I think to write to a new acquaintance in Norway to see if I can get the *Book of the Law*, so often hinted at in our Orkney transactions. Mr Lindsay's tennant is removed to Sehetland, so that the few Coins in his hand are to be sought for from thence. I have three, which are at your's or Mr Gough's service.

"I have got about the half of Torfæus translated, with comparisons, confutations, and correectiions, of and from the Seottish history, as I go along, and hope I shall finish it soon, as I sit very close at it; as much so as my cough possibly will permitt.

"BIRSA, 10th December 1777."

Meantime Mr Pennant indicates his satisfaction with what he has read of Mr Low's journal, and approves of his waiting for good weather and good company before visiting the North Isles:—

"I have read some of Mr Low's journal, and am much delighted with it. Pray lend him your new edition of British Zoology, all the volumes, for I have no more to give away. They will be of much use to him. He ought by all means to visit the northern Orknies to complete his work, which will meet with eneouragement. Pray write to him as much, and let him know I will write soon.

"Nov. 30, 1777."

"I quite approve of Mr Low's reasonable delay of visiting the rest of the Orknies. He had best reserve it for the good season and good company. In less than a fortnight I shall begin to read his MS. Let me beg you would on no account communicate his drawings, which would be a most eruel anticipation. I beg to know if Mr Mackenzie published charts of the Shetlands: if he has, Mr Low

should take the benefit of them. I enclose those of the Orknies taken from my map, borrowed from Mr Maekenzie for Mr Low to see.

“ December 26, 1777.”

In February 1778, Mr Low sends Mr Paton an account of some antiquities from graves in Westray.

“ DEAR SIR,—This is the first time I have had an opportunity to send you a drawing of the Dogfish, which I have not delayed longer than till it dried on the paper. Dogs are very infrequent on these coasts in winter.

“ I have just now fallen in with a few very great curiosities from one of the neighbouring graves to where the *glass cup* was found, and which I have seenred.

“ 1, A sword made of bone, being part of the jaw of a Spermaeeti Whale, broke in the middle ; 2, an iron sword, in bad preservation ; 3, part of a easque or helmet, very neatly ornamented with engraving ; 4, several things made of stone, uses unknown, resembling the whorles made use of in making a spindle turn.

“ You may depend on the dog being very like ; and also on having the above catalogue sent as soon as I take drawings of them.

“ I have almost finished Torfæus ; so shall be ready to go to the North Isles first good weather.”

Writing Mr Paton again in the following March, Mr Low seems much amused at Mr Pennant's nervous anxiety lest any one should take the wind out of his sails by making use of information or drawings communicated by Mr Low:—

“ My best thanks for your attention to my poor performance in Mr Gough's anecdotes. Mr Pennant seems to be frightened out of his *skin* about anticipation, troth I believe he needs not be afraid ; I wish the work be worth quoting ; however, he must be pleased. What is the map of which you inclosed a slip ?

“ Mr M'Kenzie *never* did survey Schetland, you may depend on it.

“ Mr Constable does me great honour by his subscription. I indeed must ascribe it to his munificence. I shall endeavor to collect everything remarkable in the North Isles that will instruct or amuse, *apropos* I sent in an express to secure every particular of the Westra curiosities, of which I shall make drawings and transmitt.

"I do not propose, as your friend Dr Cuming thinks, to give anecdotes from Torfæus in my Tour (as this would anticipate my general work), except where absolutely necessary to clear up any abstruse point. His subscription gives one great encouragement,—that men of taste will deign to read the serawl of *a poor trow of an Orkney bodie seeking its way home.*

"BIRSA, 4th March 1778."

Meantime Mr Pennant writes that he has had two of Mr Low's drawings engraved, most probably for use in his Arctic Zoology (2 vols. 4to, 1785), in which a number of engravings from drawings of Mr Low's made their appearance, including the Doreholm, Bird Catching in Shetland (misnamed Orkney), the Burghs of Burrafirth, Cullswick, Snaburgh and Hogsetter, and the ancient structures on Veminty and Fetlar. In February, 1778, he writes to Mr Paton that he has now finished the perusal of Mr Low's manuscript, and is much pleased with it. Mr Gough is to get a sight of it also, and both are to do what they can with the booksellers to obtain favourable terms for Mr Low in the matter of its publication:—

"As I have your consent I will freely show Mr Low's MS. to our friend when I visit him from London in April. It has given me much pleasure, for I have now finished it. We will try to raise among friends money for the plates, and perhaps then some bookseller will give a good price for it. I think he should publish the voyage and history first, and if that takes, the natural history may come after.

"February 8, 1778."

"I sent Mr Low's voy. to Mr Gough this week, and shall next month deliver to him all the rest of his work; so concert with him the means of returning them to you. . . . In respect to Mr Low, I will solicit subscriptions, but let him or his friends think of a bookseller.

"March 3rd, 1778."

"I shall deliver to Mr Gough Mr Low's Fauna and Flora ; so claim them from him. . . .

*" March 29, 1778."*

. . . "I have got one of Mr Low's best drawings now done by a skilful hand, and given to an engraver, and will send him proofs as soon as finished. I hope in time to get him information about the brass things. If he goes over the same ground, he must incorporate his new information with the old. I sent his Nat. History to Mr Cadel. I hope Mr Gough has taken the like care of the journal. . . .

*" April 29, 1778."*

"Mr Low may take his time, for, till affairs settle, the public attention is too much distracted to think of amusement : but, then, this is the period for individuals to compose and study. Let me also advise Mr Low to put his voyages into as small compass of words as possible, for the English love conciseness.

*" May 26, 1778."*

"Last week I sent Mr Low's MS. to Mr Cadel and hope it will find its way safely to you. I wish him a safe voyage and success. I caused his drawing of the bird catching in Orkney\* to be done over again by an elegant hand, and have put it to the engraver ; it is finely retouched, but with great fidelity.

*" July 14, 1778."*

"Mr Low need not be very precipitate, for the complection of the times is far from favourable to authors any more than the public.

*" Augt. 11, 1778."*

While the manuscript was thus being bandied from hand to hand, its unfortunate author, intent only on completing the work he had begun, had been making his long projected tour of the North Isles, under circumstances of extreme difficulty and discouragement. The manuscript

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\* This should be Shetland, not Orkney. The scene is at the Holm of Ness in Brossay.

and drawings mentioned in the following letter to Mr Paton, dated 25th September, 1778, are unfortunately lost:—

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—This is the first time upon my sincere word that I can say I have had an hour’s peace these many a day.

“I had a most wretched season to go through the North Isles with, nothing but wind and rain, which detained me in this and the ’tother place, sometimes for weeks, that I could not set my nose over the door. However, I have made a shift to get a tolerable good description of the North Isles, with an account of the most considerable curiosities lately found there, with drawings, of which you shall have an enumeration by next opportunity.”

Although the manuscripts of the Shetland Tour and the Natural History were not likely to find publishers, Mr Low was still busily engaged on the historical work, as we learn from Mr Pennant’s letters to Mr Paton:—

“I am extremely glad to hear that Mr Low’s MS. is safe. I hope to help him with some materials for his historic part, which shall pass thro’ your hands. As to the drawings I keep them as his most valuable gift to me, to be used as occasion may require.

“*Oct. 9th, 1778.*”

“I have requested Mr Cordiner, of Banff, to send you a book to be forwarded to Mr Low. It is a useful translation of whatsoever relates to Caithness, and the Orknies, in Torfæus. He may make use of the latter part for his history.

“*Oct. 18, 1778.*”

. . . “Mr Low ought in justice to send me his materials, drawings, etc., if he does not mean to go on with the work, that is I beg him to. . . .

“*March 29, 1779.*”

. . . “Dear Sir, you will be so good as to peruse the inclosed and forward it. I suppose you will be of my mind as to the plan of publication. I hope he has not made his work too large, which will



hurt the sale. Pray assist him in recommending it to a bookseller, for I would by all means have him sell it. There may be above £50 expenses in plates, some of which will be truly curious. I think he may expect £100 clear of travelling charges, which were £20.

*"May 2, 1779."*

"I am glad you take up Mr Low so strenuously. Most of the plates will be antiquarian, and done about 2 guineas each. The bird catching cost £5 5s. 0d. The bird with the island, £2 2s. 0d. I suppose the cost of plates may amount to no more than £60, and his charges in the voyage £20, which I gave him, but still, for his benefit, must be charged to account. Mr Banks has promised copies of his drawings for Mr Low's use, but, I fear, I cannot get them till I go to town. But Mr Low's own are most uncommonly curious, and, as you justly observe, his work and Mr Cordiner's added to my own, will be a most complete set of N. British Antiquities. I wish your friend Mr Elliot may be in a position to serve himself and the authors by bidding properly. For my part, as Mr Low is backward as to engravings, he should defer his publication till next year, especially if Mr Banks' drawings are to be used. Would Mr Low approve subscription, it would help the plates. I wish Mr Elliot would, on sight of the MS., estimate the expense of printing 1000 copies, if he thinks so many will sell, qto. size, of my Tours. . . .

*"May 11th, 1779."*

"I fear, from the appearance of the times, there will be no sort of hurry of offering Mr Low's book for sale; for I much apprehend that the public can for many years to come attend only to the necessaries of life; but, still, we may try what we can do, for I hate despondency. . . . If any feud prevents Mr Low from dedicating to Sir L. D., or any great Scotch patron, I shall not decline the honour.

*"July 2, 1779."*

"I have heard nothing of the proposal respecting Mr Low's voyage since I wrote. It had been unaccountably blown on by the booksellers. So I think it better to risk a little than let it be lost: it is a work of merit, and it would be a thousand pities to suppress it.

*"Augt. 9." (No year.)*

"Yesterday only I received Mr Low's MSS., the book of prints.



and the Annals of Scotland. I shall, in the course of this winter, give the tour of the Orknies a very careful perusal, and select such prints as I think will best promote its sale.

“*Sep. 17, 1779.*”

“We should consult with Mr Low about the best way of publishing his book. I will get an estimate made of the printing. As to plates that must be a matter of discretion. . . . Would he propose a subscription?”

“*May 16, 1780.*”

“I am very sorry to hear that Mr Low will not visit you. As to his book, had you not best recommend it to him to have it sent to Mr Cadel, who is a man of spirit, and will, perhaps buy it of him. When with him the price of printing may be estimated. As to the engravings, I am sure they may be done one with another for about two guineas each. Pray remember that *bird catching* in Orkney, the *Skua with the view of Foula*, and *two birds* are done gratis for him.

“*June 18, 1780.*”

. . . “I will send by the first opportunity Mr Low’s MS. to Mr Cadel, and desire to know from him what he will give for it: if he declines printing it, I shall request him to forward it to you. The times are too bad for any individual (except a bookseller, who is versed in the ways of putting off things) to attempt it. . . .

“*July 16, 1780.*”

“The inclosed will shew you how long I sent the MS. of Mr Low to Mr Cadel. I must beg you, as a friend of the former, will get an answer from Cadel, or the MS. to be sent to you. Please to transact the bargain in behalf of Mr Low. The inclosed must be taken care of. . . .

“Mr Low is welcome to Mr Pope’s MS. as long as he pleases, but, when done with, let Mr Pope have it.

“*Oct. 20, 1780.*”

. . . “I have had no answer from Mr Cadel, but shall force him to one. I past two days with Mr Gough; he proposed to get the printing of Mr Low’s MS. estimated, and try to get it printed among ourselves. I wrote a query to Mr Low, but must complain for want

of an answer. A 4to book is published respecting Orknies in Denmark in Latin and Danish. I forget the title, but Mr L. should get it.

*"Dec. 15, 1780."*

. . . "My offer to Mr Gough was £20 as a share of my risque on Mr Low's voyage: he likes a subscription better: so I shall take no steps till you consult Mr Low, who formerly disliked that method.

*"Feb. 9, 1781."*

"I submit to you and Mr Low the bargain between Mr Elliot and him. These are bad times for literary attempts. If subscription is approved of, as Mr Gough seems to wish, I will take as many copies as will come to £20, in order to pay for engravings: but the circulating subscriptions gives such distaste, that I must decline that part: my spirits are far from being so good as usual, therefore must not attempt what may bring an additional pressure on them. The cost of Mr Low's voyage is quite at his service. . . .

*"April 3, 1781."*

. . . "I am truly sorry for Mr Low. I had a very acceptable letter from him. I hear nothing from Mr Gough. Nobody will be active in assisting with it but myself. I will do what I promised, but really my own business encreases so much, that I cannot do all myself. I find my mind grow too weak to load it with more trouble. . . .

*"April 28, 1781."*

"Mr Low's MS. is in the hands of Mr Hughes, printer, Turnstile. Would it not be prudent for you to send for it, and try what Mr Creech would do with it, or Mr Elliot. I keep the drawings, but any shall be forthcoming to be engraved, and I beg to recommend my neighbour, Nightly, as engraver, who will do them well and reasonably.

*"June 27, 1781."*

"I am sorry for Mr Low's illness. I hope the news is not true of the ravages in the Orknies by the enemy's privateer.

*"July 24, 1781."*

"I have somehow or other misplaced Mr Low's letter much to

my sorrow ; but do not doubt but it will appear sometime or other, and then he may depend on having them. Would he like to take £50 for his MS. if White would give it, not that I know he will.

“*Oct. 16, 1781.*”

“Let me request you to send Mr Low’s MS. to London to Mr White by first opportunity. I do think I can venture 500 copies for his benefit, and we had best have the original to print. I think he may get £50 by it in the long run.”

(No date.)

On 17th July 1781 Mr Low had been admitted a Corresponding Member of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, along with the Rev. Mr Cordiner, of Banff, on the recommendation of the Earl of Buchan, who was then first Vice-President of the Society. But this, though a gratifying recognition of the value of his unrequited labours, brought him no nearer the realisation of the oft-projected and long-deferred scheme of publication. In a subsequent letter to Mr Paton, he thus indicates his situation and feelings:—

“*BIRSA, 7th March 1783.*”

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have long owed you a long letter, but really I had not a great deal to say, as nothing but poverty and misery reigns here ; little researches for anything but bread.

“As to Monsieur Pennant, I have given up all thoughts of his patronage, or indeed any body else ; and care very little for printing at all. If the MSS. please or diverts a few friends who may wish to know what is doing in Orkney, that is all I expect from it.”

Mr Pennant exonerates himself as follows:—

“I am sorry that nothing can be done in Mr Low’s affair. I offered the MS. long ago to Mr White and Mr Robson, and they both rejected it. As that was condemning, I must not risque £150 on it. It would have been folly, for the bookseller would have taken it could anything be made of it.

“*Dec. 10.*” (No year.)

In 1785 Mr Pennant's "Arctic Zoology" appeared in two quarto volumes. In it he gives a condensed account of the antiquities of the Orkney and Shetland Isles, drawn from Mr Low's materials. In the preface to it he says:—

"For the drawings from which these antiquities were engraven, I am indebted to the Rev. Mr Low, minister of Birsá, in Orkney, who, at my request, made the voyage of the Orkney and Shetland Isles in 1778. He hath prepared his journal for the press; it is to be hoped that the liberality of the public will enable him to give this addition to my labours, which will complete the account of the northern part of the British Dominions."

In April, 1786, Mr Pennant enquires at Mr Paton, "Pray where is Mr Low's manuscripts?" And in August, 1788, he writes as follows:—

"I was in hopes to have heard before this from Mr Low: for I apprehend no one has a right to his property but himself. It is very extraordinary that Mr Gough should keep Mr Low's MS. so many years, and make so free a use of what was formed at my instigation, and at my expense. It is equally hard that I should be deprived of the credit due to me of having at much expense pushed the northern discoveries as I have done by Mr Cordiner and Mr Low. The former, indeed, has been grateful. I wrote to Mr Low as soon as I received your letter of June 19th, as to the MS. I dare say your friend need not look for it anywhere but in his own library. I am told he has lately, most deservedly, met with some very rough treatment. I am most ready to give up the drawings to *Mr Low's order*, but if they are designed for publication, I must article for fifteen copies to give my friends, and also that such an acknowledgment as I shall approve be put in the preface.

"*Augt. 2, 1788.*"

"I thank you for your obliging letter. Mr Low's drawings are collected together, and shall be delivered the moment you have

prevailed on any bookseller to publish the work. I fancy no one will refuse the small encouragement I request.

“*Augt. 30, 1788.*”

Mr Low's last letter to Mr Paton (so far as they have been preserved) is undated, and is as follows:—

“As to other things, I received Mr Pennant's letter inclosed, which I thank you for ; but, *inter nos*, I do not think Mr Pennant is so firm as I thought him. Some years ago he promised mighty things ; after he offered the MSS. to the book merchants for a certain price, one-half to be paid at one term, another at another ; *that would not do*. He wrote me not to give a hint of that intended publication to any body. The next thing was, he was going to publish a Northern Zoology, in which he was to take extracts from that MSS., which would not hurt it, but rather introduce it to the publick. *But stay, what is to be published? Is it not all published a'ready! One has taken a leg, another an arm, some a toe, some a finger, and MR PENNANT THE VERY HEART'S BLOOD OUT OF IT.* And what is said now when I see it in the Northern Zoology, the Heavy Ednr. Dictionary, even in Sibbald's Magazine. Why, it is possible I may have nothing when other people make their accounts of it. I shall not say if anything will be made at all. Time will try. What Mr Pennant was suspicious of, I believe, was your sending these papers to Mr Gough, who in a work anent ancient graves had made two quotations from it, and from another little paper and drawing which was engraved in the Society of Antiquaries' publications at London. However, Mr Pennant has taken care to avail himself of larger extracts, which I really think, my Dear Friend, will render the MSS. useless to the world. Your judgment will tell me as far as you can ; but, to tell you the truth, I have little hopes of Magill's plan, more than others ; so much for that.

. . . “A post ago I had, under Lord Selkirk's Frank, Lord Buchan's speech to the Antiquaries, to which I returned answer, and which shall be performed if that publication does not come on. I will write you more full to-morrow ; to-night my gnawing arm will go no farther. I shall make it go a little farther now. I shall give up every manuscript for the use of the Society. If they cannot instruct, they may give hints. I am very certain there are few mistakes in the topography of Orkney and Schetland. Their manners, customs, traditions, superstitions, &c., with regard to the people. As to the Zoology,



Ichthyology, and Botany, all I saw I described. Since I saw Dilenius, it is possible I may have made some mistakes in substituting species for varieties. In the other 23 classes I think I am not very often mistaken. More rest must be to the gnawing arms, and worst at night. What has become of the Botanick part I know not ; it went with the rest, and according to Mr Pennant's directions was shortened to Linnæus's and Lightfoot's books, without any other quotations ; tho', in some cases, the descriptions of both the elder and younger Rankine have helped me much ; tho' poor men, they are out of date long ago ; that was Wallace's plants to which, when I could not find them, I set a sceptical mark to Dr Wallace's catalogue. It has surely fallen *by* Mr Pennant's hand. I am certain and sure it came thro' yours, and if I do not mistake you wrote me (tho' I cannot just now find the letter, and they are carefully laid by) that you had bound or sewed the MSS. into two vols. Now, I could not think the whole Botanic part could be lost. If it is, the first edition is to the fore, tho' not so exact as the second, as the first was the fruits of many years application, and the second to correct it.

"By the London papers I saw an advertisement of an eclipse of Jupiter by the moon, which was to happen on Sunday the 30th Dec. However, I was looking out for it before, and in Orkney it happened on the 23rd, just one week before the prediction. The time was regulated by watch which seldom goes but a few minutes wrong, and had been set by a meridian line that same Sunday at twelve. The Immersion was at six and one minute afternoon. The Emersion, six hours, twenty-four minutes, thirty seconds, as nearly as I could observe. I observed with a pretty two foot Telescope of Short's, and was attentive as I could be. I have sent you up a little scheme of it as it happened in Orkney just from the eye ; and the glass I mention. Your astronomers will judge whether my observation in Orkney coincides with theirs at Edinburgh, according to the places observed in."

In the "Literary Life of the late Thomas Pennant, by himself," which was published in 1793, there is the following paragraph regarding Mr Low's manuscript Tour:—

"As it was my wish that no part of North Britain or its islands should be left unexplored, or any of their advantages lost for want of notice, I supported the Reverend Charles Cordiner, Episcopal minister at Banff, in a journey over the



countries north of Loch Broom, which I was obliged to desist from attempting. This he performed much to my satisfaction in 1776. I published his journal, entitled ‘Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland,’ at my own hazard. It is illustrated with twenty-two plates, taken from drawings by the skilful pencil of that ingenious traveller. The work succeeded. I made him a present of the expenses which attended his journey. I was actuated by the same zeal in respect to the extreme islands of the same part of our kingdom. In the Reverend Mr George Low, minister of Birsá, in the Orknies, I met with a gentleman willing to undertake the visitation of those islands, and of the Shetlands, and to communicate to me his observations of everything he imagined would be of use to the kingdom, or afford me pleasure. His surveys were made in the years 1774 and 1778, and he favoured me with a most instructive journal and several drawings. It was my wish to publish his voyages as I had the travels of Mr Cordiner; but certain reasons discouraged me. This ought not to be considered as any reflection on the performance. Mr Low gives a good account of the natural history and antiquities of the several islands, enters deeply into their fisheries and commercial concerns, and, on the whole, is highly worthy the attention of the public.”

The subsequent history of the manuscript is told by Dr Samuel Hibbert in the preface to his *Description of the Shetland Islands* (1822) as follows:—

“I shall lastly observe that a volume of Mr Low’s MS. *Tour* having fallen into my possession, it will be found that I have frequently adverted to it. The work was drawn up with great care, but, from some unexplained cause, was

never published; while the most important observations were selected from it (evidently with the author's consent), and appeared in Mr Pennant's *Aretic Zoology*. After poor Low's MSS. had been thus freely drawn upon, little more remained meriting a distinct publication, and the *Tour*, along with the author's *Fauna Oreadensis*, eventually fell into the hands of his friend Mr Paton, when they were again, by other writers, more or less ransacked for information. On the occasion of Mr Paton's decease, Mr Low's MSS. were brought to the hammer, when the *Fauna Oreadensis* fortunately came into the possession of Dr Leask, who published it with a well-deserved tribute to the author's memory. The *Tour* afterwards appeared in the sale catalogue of Mr Laing, of Edinburgh, when it was purchased by myself, but there was little matter left that had not in some shape or other been long before the public, the drawings being the most valuable part of the whole. Some information, however, respecting the earlier customs of Shetland still remained, that had escaped the notice of those who had seen the work, and it is now, for the first time, presented to the public; and if I have been more particular in referring to one individual that has been consulted than to another, it has been to this excellent, yet unfortunate, author, having, indeed, no other wish than to render every tribute in my power to departed merit."

The *Fauna Oreadensis* had been published by Dr William Elford Leach in 1813, forming a quarto volume of 230 pages. The manuscript of the *Flora Oreadensis*, also completed by Mr Low, is stated to have passed into the hands of Rev. Dr George Barry, minister of Shapinshay, and to have been used by him in his *History of Orkney*, published in 1800.

Dr Leach refers to this in his preface to the Fauna, and does not hesitate to accuse Dr Barry of having used Mr Low's materials without acknowledgement. Professor Traill says, "I recollect the late Dr Barry shewing me a MS. Flora, which he informed me was the work of Mr Low, but his (Dr Barry's) MSS. having been committed, in his last illness, just before the publication of his History of Orkney, to the care of a person in Edinburgh, who was entrusted by the publishers with bringing out the work, have disappeared. I have, however, been so fortunate as to procure a sort of memorandum book of the naturalist, which seems to have been his constant companion, and contains both a Fauna and a Flora Orcadensis, with specific characters in Latin. The list of species is complete in both, and the descriptions of plants probably little less full than they were in the lost Flora." This manuscript, which is entitled "Memorandums of the Natural History of the Orcades, by George Low," still exists among those preserved by Dr R. Omond; there is also among the MSS. preserved by Rev. J. R. Omond a fragment of a Flora which is much fuller in detail than that given by Dr Barry in his History of Orkney.

The sequel of the unfortunate author's history is soon told. His spirit broken by bereavement, his literary hopes blighted, and his health shattered by excessive application, Mr Low gradually sank into a condition of truly pitiable suffering. His extraordinary labours of compiling, transcribing, drawing, and, above all, his devotion to the fascinating study of the microscope, so affected his eye-sight, that in 1790 he was attacked with ophthalmia. For three years he suffered severely from repeated attacks of inflammation, which at last produced opacity of the cornea,

and in 1793 he became all but totally blind. No greater calamity could be conceived than that which had now overtaken him. Deprived of the only solace left to a mind so keenly alive to the beauties and mysteries of nature, he manifested his cheerful resignation to the special hardship of his lot; and, it was noticed, that instead of impairing his usefulness in preaching, his blindness greatly improved it, and rendered his people more tenderly attached to him. It was impossible for a nature like his to be left absolutely without resource, and in the days of his darkness, he returned to the cultivation of a taste for music, which had lain dormant with him till the keener activities of the intellect had been thus paralysed by the failure of sight, which had truly been to him "the mind's most perfect minister."

After much suffering, he died at Birsay on 13th March, 1795, in the 49th year of his age, and 21st of his ministry.

TOUR









## A TOUR THRO' ORKNEY AND SCHETLAND, IN 1774.

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IN complianee with Mr Pennant's request I undertook the Survey of the ORKNEYS, and on

1774. *May 4th.*—Left Stromness and visited the Isle of Græmsay.

### GRÆMSAY.

This small Island is about a mile in length, and something more than a half in breadth, pretty well inhabited by a very stout raw boned race of men, which is much owing to their not mixing with others, and marrying mostly among themselves; however this is not now so much the case since they were deprived of the flower of their men by an accident at sea, in a voyage to Suleskerry, whither they had gone in quest of seals. The ground is well cultivated after their manner, and produces well, but they have but little grass and are obliged to turn their sheep and young cattle over to Hoy in summer to pasture; likewise from this, and Waes, they are forced to bring all their peats for fuel as Græmsay is quite destitute of this article. This isle has no partiular produce; the men are stout fishers,

but this, as elsewhere, is pursued but little farther than to supply present necessity or procure a few trifles from Stromness. There are great quantities of Slate in this isle, most of the rocks of the inner parts of the isle being nothing else, but they are not sought after, except for covering country houses, in which case they are raised in great flakes, and make a very heavy and rather uncomfortable roof; for tho' the houses are thatched above these with straw, this is seldom so well performed as to exclude either wind or rain. This island is by itself a Parish, having a small Church in which divine service is performed every third Sunday by the minister of Hoy, to which I next proceeded, and,

### HOY.

*May 5th.*—Visited that part of the Island properly so called. The whole island, which comprehends North Waes to which South Waes is joined by a narrow neck of land, is about twelve miles in length, and is by far the highest land in the Orkneys, being a continued chain of mountains from Hoy Head to Melsetter at the parting of N. and S. Waes.

Only a small part of Hoy is inhabited, or cultivated, by far the greater part is occupied by mountains, which however are not altogether useless, for they feed a vast number of sheep on their tops and sides, and in the vallies furnish pasture for multitudes of young eattle in summer, but have no shelter against the storms of winter, so that all must then be housed, which is a great drawback upon their keeping such a quantity as the hills could maintain in the summer, because their very small farms cannot afford them fodder for winter, and they have no market to bring them

to after the summer pasture is over. The Wart hill of Hoy is the highest (as was said before) in Orkney, yet looks much more so than it really is, being a large clump, the sides very steep, rocky, and much furrowed by the winter falls of snow water, which at that season carry rocks and everything else before them. This hill as the others is covered with long heath at the bottom and for a good way up, but near the top the heath declines and is succeeded by a spongy marsh, which continues more or less to the top, on which is a small loch which seldom dries in the hottest summer. The sides and tops of these hills are covered with various Alpine plants, as may be seen more particularly in the natural history part, but among many others I observed the *Salix herbacea*, *reticulata*, and *glauca*, the *Lenecis paludosus*, a variety of which grows near the top of the hills among the moist hollows of the rocks; several species of Saxifrage, the plant *Rhodiola rosea*, which the country people here use for curing wounds, and might be used with success with tormentil their succedaneum for bark in tanning; besides these the *Rumex digynus* very frequent among the rocks, the *Lichen saxatilis* used for dying wollen stuffs, the *Lichen rangiferinus*, and *islandicus*, all very frequent, as well as many other useful and curious plants, the inhabitants of very different climates. Hoy affords several sorts of minerals and mineral springs; Iron is nowhere more frequent, and hence many springs impregnated with it, which are used by the inhabitants in various cases and often with success; but whether from imagination, or from the real service they may be in the very different diseases to which they are administered is not so easily investigated. The ores of iron in Hoy are of two kinds and found in great



plenty in two different places. That dug near the Kirk is Hæmatites and tho' it may be had in great quantities yet cannot bear the expense of carriage and work, as I am informed it is but a poor ore, and we lie at a great distance from any iron foundry. Another kind may be had in vast quantities from Hoy-head, where it runs in many regular veins in the very brink of the sea rocks. This is blaker than the former to appearance, it is much more solid, and weightier, looks as if it had been once in fusion, and had settled in a number of bubbles, which however I dare say has not been the case: its first formation is from an infinite number of small particles or drops adhering very firmly together and growing still more solid as they imbibe more of the iron till at length it becomes a flint-like mass of the colour above described. Some years ago a company of adventurers from London dug several tons of this last, which they imagined was an ore of Cobalt but without foundation. They sent several specimens to London, but how it turned out I could never learn. The work however was given up. When Mr Banks was in Orkney, on his way from Iceland, he took a step to this mine and smelted a piece of the ore and assured me of its being iron, but I am afraid in our circumstances can be of little value, for had we spirit we have no fuel to work it in Orkney, and the distance we have to send to the nearest manufactory of iron hinders us from making any profit by transporting it thither.

Lead is not infrequent in Hoy, and seems to run in a continued vein from the opposite mainland to a place called Selwick in Hoy. But tho' this has been wrought, the true vein has not yet been discovered, what has yet been found

seeming rather unconnected clumps than in vein. What I have seen of the ore is pure, very heavy, and seemingly rich, but as yet have not heard the proportion of metal it yields or what quantity of Silver it might give, tho' undoubtedly it contains some of the latter, as most other lead ores do. The figure of the ore is cubical, blue, and shining, may be observed in many places of the island like nails drove into the rocks, but the greatest quantity is to be found at a good depth below the surface.

Hoy has the greatest variety of natural beauties, the most romantic appearance of all the Orkneys; its hills are interspersed with deep vallies, thro' which run several winding rivulets (or burns) full of trout, the banks covered with shrubs of various kinds, which agreeably relieve the eye after long viewing the other woodless isles. The shrubs consist chiefly of Hazle, Birch, Poplar, Currant, and vast quantities of Ivy and Honeysuckles, the latter of which not only adorns the landscape by its tufts of fine flowers but scents it with their agreeable smell. There are many curious echoes among the hills of Hoy, the best of which I had one day an opportunity of observing when a fowling. Having occasion to fire off my piece on the top of the hill, the air clear, and little wind, I imagined the explosion was far from being so loud as on even ground, but to be certain of this phenomenon I repeated the experiment and with the same effect, for it was evidently nothing near so loud or sharp, and indeed the report seemed little louder than that of a child's popgun: but as I came down towards the valley the case was much altered, for there not only the report was augmented but it rebounded from all the neighbouring hills. I was much pleased when I heard it re-echoed from the

opposite mountain, but much more so when a few moments after this was ended, a second much louder and longer continued sounded thro' the vallies; this was scarce over, when echo a third time roused from her cave, in a voice like distant thunder, murmured thro' the remotest dales, dying away by degrees, and at last losing herself in the song of the birds and the lowings of the cattle then scattered thro' the vallies. It is to be observed that this echo succeeds best in summer when the earth is quite dry, and when one stands on the north-west shoulder of the Wart-hill, and has the greatest effect when one fires the piece directly at the opposite hill; when directed the contrary way it is not near so strong and the third time could scarce be heard at all.

The inhabitants of the dreadful rocks which surround this island are Eagles, Lyres, Aukes, Little Aukes, Guillemotes, Cormorants, Shags, and many others given account of in the natural history part of this tour.

The people of Hoy are not very numerous, as but a very small part of the island is cultivated. They are very much given to superstition, and an universal belief of witchcraft prevails among them, which by no arguments can be rooted out even from among people otherwise not a little sagacious. They put a great deal of trust in the cure of diseases by spells and enchantments,\* also they give great power to

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\* With respect to taking away the strength of ale they gave the witch the same power, as the curious reader may see by the following extract from an old Session Register of Hoy:—"4th August 1672.—After preaching sedr. the minr. and elders This day compeared Elspet Smith and gave in a complaint upon Mercon Mangie for slandering her as guilty of witchcraft, in saying that the said Elspit Smith complainer, by sending for ane pynt of

witches to inflict these by the same means; and this is not confined to themselves, but extended to their goods and cattle, which they imagine witches have power to hurt, or at least to take away their milk, butter, or cheese, &c.\* by their magical incantations. They are afraid of hurt either in person or goods from an evil eye, and have particular ceremonies to avert the malignity of it, but pretend to make a mighty mystery of their rites. They also fear an evil tongue, and there are not a few instances of poor creatures falling ill thro' mere imagination upon being cursed by an enemy. Nobody must praise a child or anything they set a value on, for if anything evil afterwards befalls it, these poor ignorant creatures will be sure to attribute to the tongue that spoke of it, and very probably quarrel on that account. This they call forspeaking, and pretend to cure persons so forspoken by washing them with a water† compounded with great ceremony, the recipe of which our female sages the only administrators, make an impenetrable secret; however these superstitious notions are not confined to Hoy alone, but are spread up and down the whole country, and to be found more or less in every corner of it.

A similar notion prevails very much in several places thro' Orkney as well as Hoy, which is the belief of fairies, and their power of killing their cattle, which they are said

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ail from the said Mereon selling the same, Did thereby take awa the fruit and fusion of ane dusson of pynts or thereby that remained in the vessel &c."

\* *Vide* Appendix, No 1.

† *Vide* *ibid*.

to perform with those flint weapons called commonly Elf-shots or Elfarrows, of which as many stories are told, and as firmly believed, as could be picked up in all Scotland. They use great pains in recovering beasts struck with the elfshot. An old woman skilled in these matters is called who pretends to find the hole still open by which the arrow entered, and which is not in this ease to be found (for it must be remarked that it is only when it falls short that the arrow is picked up). She then washes the part with mighty ceremony and expects a cure!

There are many other particulars of this kind of folly still remaining among the more ignorant vulgar, as charming diseases from one\* to another;† foretelling events by dreams; deaths by deathlights, death-drops, and death watches, or by Ghosts here called Ganfers, in all which many place more confidence than in the more reasonable propositions that can be adduced to convince them of the absurdity of such notions.

A few of the Hoy men and several of these of Raekwick‡ are most excellent climbers in the rocks; with the help of a rope which is held by an assistant and conducted by him as necessity requires, they will go over the highest rocks, and fetch up sea birds, eggs, sheep, or whatever else may have gone over, nay so desperate are some in their attempts for

\* This they do by washing the party with an enchanted water (*Vide* p. 7 and App.) which they afterwards carry to the next gateway, and throw it down there, and the person who passes next that way is supposed to be seized with the same disease that had afflicted the former.

† To which we may add telling out diseases. *Vide* App., No. 1.

‡ A small spot on that side of Hoy which looks towards Caithness.



eggs, fowls, &c., that I have been informed of several in the parish of Sandwick in the mainland letting one another over on straw ropes for want of hair ones, tho' at the same time they are sensible the greatest care cannot sometimes save them from destruction, even when assisted with the best means of preservation. Ropes made of swines hair are preferred by our climbers to all others because of their softness which hinders them from cutting on the sharp cliffs so readily as hemp ones; the only danger in the former is their untwisting, which is sometimes the case, and is the occasion of the loss of many lives in this dreadful employment; however this never hinders new attempts, as the love of gain is too apt to make people overlook the most imminent danger.

In my way along the hills I observed many Curliews, Plovers, Sea Larks, Redshanks, and other Gralle, which bring forth their young there, also several short eared Owls among the heath, numbers of Moorfowl, and Sea Pies, on the wing, but as yet could not observe any of their eggs. In the highest cliffs saw several pairs of the Erne or Ringtail Eagle, but could not get at them.

#### WAES.

*May 7th.*—Passing thro' the mountains entered

Waes, or as it is sometimes written, tho' I suppose corruptly, Walls.

That part of Waes which joins with Hoy is like it barren and mountainous, in the vallies are several lochs of fresh water on which I observed several pairs of Raingeese, and was informed they hatch on the very brink of these, but

could find none of their nests as it was then rather too early in the season for them. North Waes is but thinly inhabited, nothing but sea coasts and round the bays being under cultivation; has many excellent harbours and bays for the convenience of shipping, as Orehope, Northhope, and Kirkhope; the whole island is cut into Voes, or, as the inhabitants call them, Feos, which probably has been the occasion of the name Voes, by time changed into Waes.

The Peninsula of South Waes is much better inhabited than the north side, and very fruitful in Corn, of which in good seasons they dispose a good deal, particularly to the inhabitants of the village of Stromness. But tho' this part of the island be the most fruitful it has a very bare look, owing to the thinness of the uncultivated part, which consists of mere brake with searee a covering of heath, which much diminishes the beauty of its cornfields and is but little use for pasture.

Great part of Waes belongs to the family of Moodie of Melsetter, whose habitation is at the head of the long hope, on an eminence which commands a view both of the south isles of Orkney and Pightland Firth and north coast of Seotland from Duncansbay head a vast way thro' Strathnaver. The long hope abounds in small Coekles, vast quantities of which are yearly caught with rakes, both for the sake of the fish and shells; of the latter they make a very white lime much used for white washing houses and sold pretty high for that purpose.

Waes is washed by the Pightland Firth, and sometime ago was famous for a codfishing, but this of late years has been given up (thro' laziness I suppose) so that now nothing

remains of it but a house on the Aire\* which bears the empty name of the Fish-house. There are a few oysters to be got about Waes, and so very large that they must be cut in four before they can be eaten, but in no quantity. These were said to have been planted by a Mr Moodie of Melsetter, who likewise introduced hares and partridges into the island, neither of which seem to have thriven, owing probably to the great number of ravenous birds in their neighbourhood and the want of proper shelter from them.

Large quantities of Kelp is made round Waes, of which we shall speak more particularly when we come to take notice of the produce of Orkney in general.

From Brims or Snelsetter in Waes a Ferry boat crosses for Caithness, the Pightland Firth here full twelve miles broad.

Many remains are yet to be found of the more ancient inhabitants of the island, both civil and religious, which we shall take more particular notice of in the mainland, because these specimens of both kinds of monuments are found more entire, and better conjectures can be drawn from them. In Hoy and Waes we see on the tops of vast rocks small works which tradition tells us the people fled to in case of disturbance from abroad, which in these days was very frequent; these seldom consist of anything else than a rock almost separated from the main to which even friends could not come without danger; the land side is always secured by a mud or stone-wall, which was all their method of defence. These places seem however better adapted to

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\* Aire is a small neck of land joining a Peninsula to the adjacent main.

seeure their goods than their persons, as they seldom were so far from land as to seeure them from the darts or arrows of any assaliant, and having no eommunication with the main but by one narrow passage, nor with the sea because of the vast height of the rocks, they might easily have been starved without striking a stroke. The demensions too of many of these castles as they are called are so small as not to admit many people, so that it is more probable they here lodged their most valuable goods, and defended them on the main. On several of these insulated rocks, so frequent round Orkney, numbers of Sea fowl inhabit, such as the Great black and white Gull, Shags, &c.; many of them too make good landmarks for seamen, as that called the Old Man of Hoy, a vast spire having something the appearance of a man with a large burden on his back, and much taken notice of by all sailors that frequent Hoy sound. Many vast eaverns abound round the whole island, the receeptaes of vast flocks of Rock Pigeons, and sometimes Seals, but the latter are more frequent on these rocks that appear at low water and here called Skerries; great numbers may be seen on the Skerries of Hoy and others about Waes, but few are eaught as on the least appearance of danger every one of them tumbles off the rocks into the sea.

In my way thro' the east side of Hoy took a trip to Rissa-little, which is remarkable for nothing that I could observe. It is a small uninhabited island altogether allotted for pasturage of sheep, and even this is none of the best. It is covered with moss for fuel, and in the heath observed a very few Moorfowl. Thence went to Cava, another small island, partly inhabited, the rest moor ground, from which such quantities of Peats were cut as supplied a salt pan, but

this has been given up these many years. Proceeded to Fara, an island sometimes inhabited and at other times not; at present there is a single family on it, the rest of it being pasture for sheep. The rocks of this small isle are mostly all limestone, contrary to the nature of the opposite shore, which is in some places Schist, in others Granite.

*May 9th.*—Took boat in Waes for Stroma. In the Pightland Firth saw vast numbers of Gannets, the first I observed this season, also the first Scoutiaulin, with several other more common birds from the rocks, as Taistes, Lyres, Auks, Tommy Nodies, Scouts, and here and there a large flock of Kittywakes pursuing the small fry of fish in the firth. These Kittywakes in summer perfectly cover the rocks, and often fly out in such flocks as to form a thick cloud; their young are tolerable eating if caught before they fly, after this period they acquire more of the rankness of other sea-birds.

The Pightland Firth from the earliest times has been famous for its many and rapid tides, and the imaginary danger in passing these. I for my share saw none more than one might expect in passing a very rapid current in tolerable weather. Indeed when the wind and tide run contrary, the sea runs mountains high and there is no passing with safety. Also with a wrong time of tide, *i.e.*, when the flood or ebb runs strong, there is danger of being hurried away to sea, for no boat or even a ship with all her sails can stem the current.

In passing the Pightland Firth, one cannot fail observing a number of currents, which appear like pretty large rivers, running in the midst of dead water, and can be seen at some distance, owing to the many sounds of Orkney thro' which



these currents proceed, and the many points and islands which break the main stream and give fresh motion to so many new currents, which by this new acquired rapidity, forcing themselves a passage thro' the more equal course of the main tide, cause these irregularities so much wondered at. For example, the tide of flood setting from the N.W. meets with no resistance from anything except a few headlands in Orkney and on the Caithness shore, till it comes to Cantick head in Waes, there it meets a tide coming thro' Hoy sound which is broke into many streams by the islands of Cava, Fara, Flotta, Switha and Swona, and kept in by the large island of S. Ronaldsha. The course of all these lesser streams are quite across the great stream of Pightland Firth, but their rapidity is greater, therefore every one will occasion an alteration in the great tide, and this meeting of two contrary tides when the water is much disturbed by it we call a roust, which is often dangerous for boats, especially when the violence of the wind contributes to put the waves of that spot in a still greater rage. Again the tide of Pightland Firth continues in some measure undisturbed till it comes to Stroma, upon the north point of which it breaks with prodigious violence, and goes off with vast rapidity forming an amazing current called the Swelehie, as on the south end the tide by breaking the same way and with the same force, but with ebb, form the Merry Men of May, currents which it is impossible to stem with sails or oars, but vessels will be hurried away by them like feathers before the wind. A little below the neck of the stream, or where the water breaks on Stroma, it goes off in vast whirls, and forms a roust by the dancing of the stream now spread wider than before, and spending its lately acquired



vigour in this tremulous motion, and if any boat be so unhappy as to be hurled down into this gulf it is a thousand to one if it is not tumbled over and over as the waves attack it on all sides, often mounting it on its very end, throwing the men hither and thither out of it, and in a word rendering it absolutely impossible for them to save themselves by any manner of slight or cunning.

All these evils and others about Pightland Firth may be easily guarded against by choosing a proper tide, which is sometime before slack water (as it is called by the ferry-men) *i.e.*, about an hour before the high or low water, at any of which times wind and weather favouring, the firth may be passed with great safety, as I then did, and landed at Stroma.

#### STROMA.

Tho' this small isle does not so properly come within my province, as it is never reckoned one of the Orkneys, and has from the earliest times belonged to the people of Caithness, yet I was the more willing to give it a visit as my very worthy friend Mr Pennant, in his Tour 1769, did not traverse it, and therefore a description of it here will in some measure connect what he has written concerning the northern counties of Scotland, with what may here be said of this part of the isles.

Stroma is situate in the Pightland Firth, within two miles of Caithness, about two miles long, and something more than one broad; inhabited by about thirty families, who cultivate that half of it which faces the east. They use no plow in agriculture, but labour all their corn grounds with the spade, at which they are very dextrous, and far

exceed others in the islands at this kind of work. The soil is good, black and deep, thrown up into high ridges by the spade, in a word the whole cultivated part of the Island is dressed like a garden and produces far greater crops than are common on plowed ground. The shores are rocky, and the west side of the island high, inhabited by Cormorants, Shags, Auks, and Guillemots. The uncultivated part is a very thin and poor soil, a mere bare brake, not frequented by any bird except a few Lapwings.

The cultivated half of Stroma is divided into two parts, that facing the north called the Upper-town, the other, which is over against Caithness, the Nether-town. In the Upper-town we see the remains of a pretty large house and gardens once possessed by a gentleman the proprietor of the Island, who being forced to fly his native home on account of a duel, chose this for his retreat; and indeed the beauty of this little spot would be a great inducement to many others who had not such motives to force them to retirement from the world.

The tomb which once contained the famous natural Mummies is at the other end of the Island, near the sea bank. I went thither in full expectation of seeing them entire as formerly, however was much dissappointed when entering the tomb I saw nothing but two bare skulls laid apart, and in the bottom of the vault (which is full of sheep's dung) a few leg and thigh bones, with others, but quite bare, and no appearance of what they had been, nor could one have judged from their appearance that they had been preserved above ground. I was informed by the inhabitants of the island, that euriosity to see the mummies had brought many people to Stroma, that some

out of mere wantonness had shattered the door, and others the bodies; and the door not being repaired, Sheep and Cattle entered the vault, and trampled them to pieces.

The men are stout hardy spademen as was said before, the women while young are tolerably well looked, but as they advance in age grow very hard favoured, acquiring a peculiar ghastliness in their countenances contrary to what is observed of the women in Orkney.

On the west side of the island they find several of those small flint weapons commonly called Elfshot (*Sagittæ Lamiarum*, *patris sermone*, Elfarrow heads. *Vide* Rob. Sibbaldi *Prod: Nat: Hist: Scot: p. 49*) or arrow heads; they showed me several, but could not be prevailed to part with them, as they imagine as long as they possess one of these, the fairies can have no power over their cattle or persons.

I observed a small stone work on the S. west side of the island, placed on the top of a rock disjoined from the island, but say the inhabitants formerly joined to it by a draw-bridge, serving as a retreat in time of public disturbance; but this is not very likely, as the extent of the work could not have admitted any quantity of warlike stores, or a sufficient number of men to have defended it; the walls, too, are thin and badly constructed, without the least pretensions to strength, or anything in the stile of war. It is therefore more probable here they secured what was valuable in the island, and having nothing to fear from the sea side, they defended it towards the island by their own efforts, against any enemy which might disturb them. This I am the more apt to think was the case, from some remains of a mud wall which surrounds this part of the island and might have

served as a rampart or perhaps a sort of breast work to cheek the attacks of the assailants.

### SWITHA.

In the evening repassed the Pightland Firth, and as there was not sufficient tide to visit Swona, went straight for Switha, which is a high rock on the south side, but falls lower towards Flotta, quite uninhabited except by a few sheep, and a couple of Ernes which possess the rock side, and allow none of the kind to lodge near them, but live in good neighbourhood with the common sea birds that are usually found in the erags. Landed at Flotta, and

### FLOTTA.

*May 10th.*—Took a view of the Island. Flotta is an oddly shaped island, being much cloven by the Panhope (an excellent harbour); about three miles long, and two at the extreme breadth; only a small part of this is inhabited, the rest altogether moss and affording excellent fuel from which several of the neighbouring small isles not so fortunate in this particular are supplied. Formerly there was a salt pan here, whence the name of the bay or harbour, but this is now given up, and nothing now of it to be seen but a ruin of the building. The west side of the island, and that long point called the Rone, as well as the east skirt and round the Panhouse is wholly covered with long heath affording shelter for vast numbers of Moorfowl, and indeed I could scarce walk fifty yards without springing one or more of these birds. It abounds likewise with Snipes, the

musick of whose thundering wings pleases a tolerable ear, much better than the wretched fiddles I heard in Flotta, which however seemed to be much relished by the kelp burners, who after their work was over in an evening, fell a hobbling about to their noise, with most inimitable discord. A good deal of kelp is made about Flotta, as well as the other isles, which we shall hereafter have occasion to take more notice of. The part of the island which is cultivated seems a pretty good soil, and for manure they use dunghills made up of seaweed and dung mixed with earth, in the shape of cones, stratum super stratum. Between Flotta and Switha, and round the latter, there is a large fishery of Coal-fish, (to which most of the boats of the South isles daily repair and catch vast numbers) which begins in May and continues till late in the season, and is commonly succeeded and sometimes interrupted by vast swarms of the Picked Dog fish which drive every other fish from the ground; however the islanders are seldom sorry for the loss of the Coal when the Dogs continue with them, for they not only afford them victuals but yield vast quantities of valuable oil from their livers, all which fully makes up for the loss of the other, besides they are caught in such surprising numbers, that it is no uncommon thing to load their boats twice or thrice a day; however they soon go off in pursuit of other fish, which always shift stations to avoid this ravenous enemy. I have often heard those employed in this fishery warn the novices to beware of the horns (spines) of the Dog fish back, because wounds given by them are very difficult to be cured. I remember once to have seen a fisherman who had received a wound from one of them on the inside of his knee among the



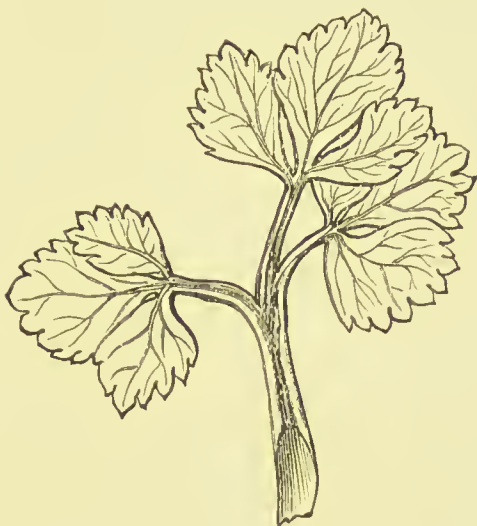
tendons, which had caused a most enormous swelling over the whole limb, but when it was cured I cannot say, as he left that part of the country. Another who had the back of his hand torn by a thorn of a skate, suffered the most excruciating torment from the wound for near two months; however probably it is not so much from any poisonous quality in the spine, as the violent laceration of the parts, or the place of the wound. I have observed too that the Dog fish when he is caught seems very sensible of the use of these weapons, and strikes them, by contorting himself round any part of the body within his reach, with great dexterity; however they generally take care to kill them on the edge of the boat as they take them in, which prevents all danger. Very few cod caught here, but many lobsters, and some very large cockles, but no oysters.

Observed in the rocks great quantities of Wallace's *Imperatorice affinis maritima umbelifera scotica*. (*Vide Wal. p. 25. 2 ed. et Sib. Hist. Scot. 32*). The flower had not yet appeared, but the leaf follows. Also the rocks both here and thro' Hoy covered with the *Rhodiola rosea Lin.*: and several other plants noticed in the botanical part of this work.

### CALF OF FLOTTA.

*May 10th.*—In the Calf of Flotta, a small holm opposite to the point of the island called the Rone. The Calf is uninhabited, and maintains only a few Sheep placed there by Sir Laurence Dundas's factor for the estate of Burra; abounds in wild birds, such as Terns, Sea Pies, Snipes, Burrough Ducks, (Shieldrakes) Eider Ducks or Dunter Geese, numbers of the latter I observed swimming about,





but the earliness of the season prevented my seeing their nests in this island, except what remained from the year foregoing, namely heaps of down in the hollows of the earth, mixed with the shells of eggs as left by the young brood, but this is of no use here as the inhabitants are unacquainted with its value, and only take the eggs with others when they can light upon them.

Observed in this island the plant *Oxalis acetosella*, Fl. Suec. 406, for the first time in Orkney, but here growing in vast plenty.

### BARREL OF BUTTER.

Took a trip to the Barrel of Butter, so named because it is said to pay that quantity of grease butter as Superior's rent, a very small holm sometimes flowed over by the sea, covered with Thrift or Sea Gilliflower (*Statice Armeria*) and a little scurvey grass, and is the resort of a few Seals which are often shot here by the inhabitants of the neighbouring mainland.

### S. RONALDSHA.

Repassed to Flotta and thence to Hoxa head (in S. Ronaldsha) a peninsula abounding in excellent arable land and joined to the island by a neck of land commonly called the How of Hoxa, remarkable for a very large ruin of a very ancient circular building, commanding an extensive prospect of Widewall Harbour, part of the Pightland Firth, and the whole northern sounds which ships commonly pass in going thro' the south isles. It seems to have been one of the principal castles and watch towers in the Danish times or earlier, and tho' tradition concerning it is very confused,

it still informs us this was a Danish work, and here one of a Danish king's sons was buried, who was slain in a battle at sea in Scapa flow or bay, not far from this spot ; but is quite silent as to the name of father or son or other circumstances.

Lay at St. Margaret's Hope, a small but convenient harbour for ships passing to or from the southward or eastward, and pretty well frequented by such vessels as chuse to sail thro' Watersound, and are taken short by the wind. Round this harbour is a most beautiful hollow for corn ground (only a little wet in winter) stretching from Widewall to Grimness, in which lies the Park of Cara enclosed by the late Sir James Stewart of Burra, containing a square mile of ground, but since his death and the downfall of the family the walls are fallen much into decay, and but little care taken to improve it, so that it is set to a tenant at a mere trifle.

Saw here the first story of a house begun by the same Sir James, on a very extensive modern plan, and rather above his ability to execute ; which too was stopped by the death of its founder.

*Wed., May 11th.*—Passed round Grimness, a rocky headland not remarkable for any but the common kinds of cliff birds ; the fields round tolerably well cultivated in the common country way, and sown with common oats and bear, as also large fields of potatoes, which this island produces in large quantities, the greater part of it being dry and sandy ground, and excellent for this kind of root. In my way towards the Minister's house saw several deep holes which I was informed were sunk in search of Lead ore, but tho' this was found in small quantities here and at Sandhill

in the same island, it was found it could not bear the charge of working, and therefore dropt.

Enter now upon the most beautiful spot of the island, and indeed preferable to any I have yet seen in Orkney: this is a small vale, surrounded with declining hills the slope of which is likewise cultivated, encircling the Manse and Church, and producing the most fertile crops both of corn and natural grass, mixed thick with daisies and white clover, which last even now, notwithstanding the backwardness of the season, was well advanced, and here rises to a great height. The soil of this spot is sandy and light, but by the help of sea weed yields largely, and is only deformed by large heaps of stones which the people gather from the grounds but are not at the pains to drive off, but throw them on the next waste spot, even tho' this is capable of being turned to good advantage for grass, which here, as was said before, rises with great luxuriancy.\*

This being the potato planting season, the inhabitants were very busily employed in this part of their labour. They here use the plow in planting, which is uncommon thro' the rest of Orkney, and as their soil is easily managed, do their work with expedition.

The corns of this island are generally late in ripening, and the crop rather precarious when the season proves broken and the harvest rainy; however this is not so much the case but this furnishes vast quantities of meal and malt

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\* This brings to my remembrance a passage in Pontop. Hist. of Norway. When speaking of the Norwegian Peasants he says "they are so superstitiously tenacious of their old customs and the usages transmitted to them by their forefathers that they will not venture to remove a stone which their fathers had suffered to lie." Pont. part I. p. 102.

even in years when many of the other isles are but poorly off in this respect, so that in general they can spare more grain than any of the S. Isles in proportion to the bulk of their island and extent of arable land.

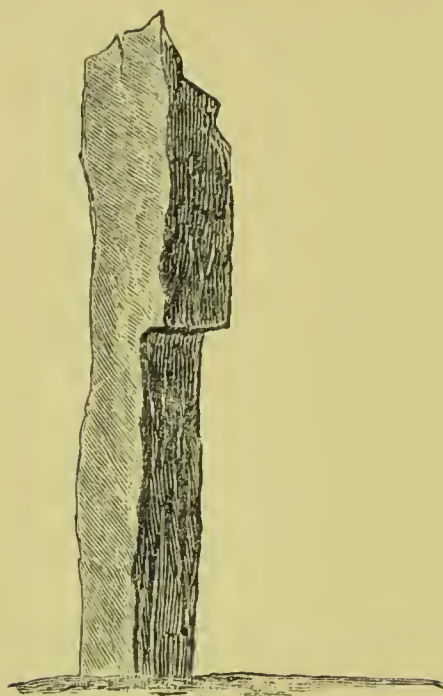
In this beautiful hollow, in a cornfield, saw a large erected stone about 16 feet above ground, probably monumental, tho' tradition is silent about it, and by digging nothing was found that could with certainty prove this.

Left this spot, and, *May 12th*, proceeded southward by Stowse head; observed on the hill the remains of a triangular monument, but very much defaced, and two of the stones broke to the stumps. Tradition is there none as to the reason &c. of its erection. The figure with a plan follows, together with the foregoing.

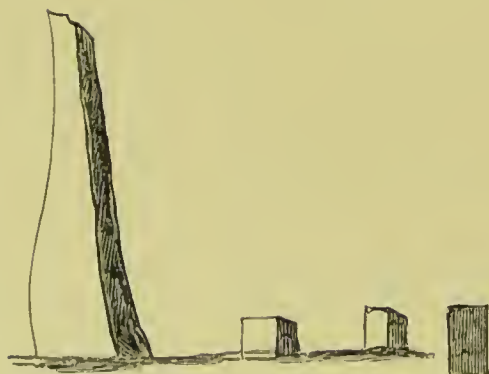
Passed from this, to the head, which is much hollowed into caves, some of which abound with Stalactitious matter which has incrusted their sides and hang from their roofs in long pieces like icicles, but nothing more remarkable than in places where similar incrustations are common. Saw here the only Jackdaws to be found in the southern parts and for aught I know in the Orkney Isles. A few pairs build in Stowse head every year, as also a very few Lyres, numbers of Swallows, and Martins, also Sand Martins skimming about, but the latter most numerous. The other common rock birds very numerous.

Passed over several good spots of land in my way round the east side of the island, crossed Halero head, Old head, both abounding in the usual birds, and landed at Burwick, the common ferry for Caithness.

In Lady Kirk at Burwick saw a large stone which tradition says St. Magnus used as a boat to ferry him over the



LARGE SINGLE STONE.

VIEW OF STANDING STONE AND  
REMAINS OF TWO OTHERS.PLAN SHOWING RELATIVE POSITIONS  
OF THE THREE.



Pightland Firth, and for its service laid it up in this Church, where it is still preserved. Its shape is boat-like, but that it ever served that purpose is of the complexion of many other Monkish stories which in times past were greedily swallowed by the unthinking vulgar. This stone is about 4 feet long, and 2 broad, about 8 inches thick, seems to have been taken from the next sea beach where many such are still to be found; has engraved on it the prints of a man's feet, which probably furnished the first hint for the miraculous use of it, and may point out the true one, which there is little doubt but it was a stone appropriated to expose delinquents at the Church in times of Popery. The figure follows.



In a small loch (near the Church) which abounds with *Equisetum*, saw hundreds of the Pewit Gulls, but as yet not one of them had begun to lay. Their nests are made of the

loeh plants neatly crossed, without any warmer materials, and placed among the grass, and on this they lay four or five dark olive coloured eggs spotted with black, the shells of which are very tender and easily broken, but are much sought after for eating. In the same loeh observed three or four pairs of Snyths (Coots) as they are here called, which build in it; as also two pairs of the "White and dusky Grebe" (Br. Zool. 2. p. 397. sp. 4.), here called "Little footy arse," which too make this their summer habitation. These last birds I had before seen, but did not know that they remained the whole year with us, which I now find they do.

Went from Burwiek along the western shore. Saw on my way to Barth head, a work on an insulated roek called the Castle, but now so much in ruins as to be quite overgrown with grass, and the walls, such as they have been, quite overturned. It has been another of these small strengths so common round the shores of Orkney, but none of which are now so entire as to trace the form, or method of erection.

At Barth head, a high roek, took boat for Swona, which I could not visit in passing the Pightland Firth, and landed there in half an hour.

### SWONA.

Swona is something more than a mile in length, partly cultivated, but the greater part not; contains nine families whose dependence is not altogether on their crops, as the situation of their isle in the Pightland Firth is very convenient for fishing, particularly Coalfish and Dogfish, the former of which they dry in small houses made of rough stones, without any cement, so that the wind blows freely

thro' the walls and cures them, but renders them much tougher than fish dried over a fire. The only produce of the isle is fish, and oil made from their livers, sold in ordinary years at 6*d.* a Scots pint. They make little use of the plough, here as in Stroma they delve the greatest part of their ground, and as in S. Ronaldsha and some other places thro' Orkney, harrow it on their cows. No fuel on the island; this they bring from Flotta where it is in plenty. Swona is bordered with high rocks consisting of Slate for the greatest part, particularly the north end of the island; in the South head there is Marble, but difficult to come at because of the height from above. Here are also many sharp pointed rocks which shoot far above water and give this place a very formidable appearance, but with little danger, as the tides rather set a ship from than on the coasts of the Pightland Firth isles.

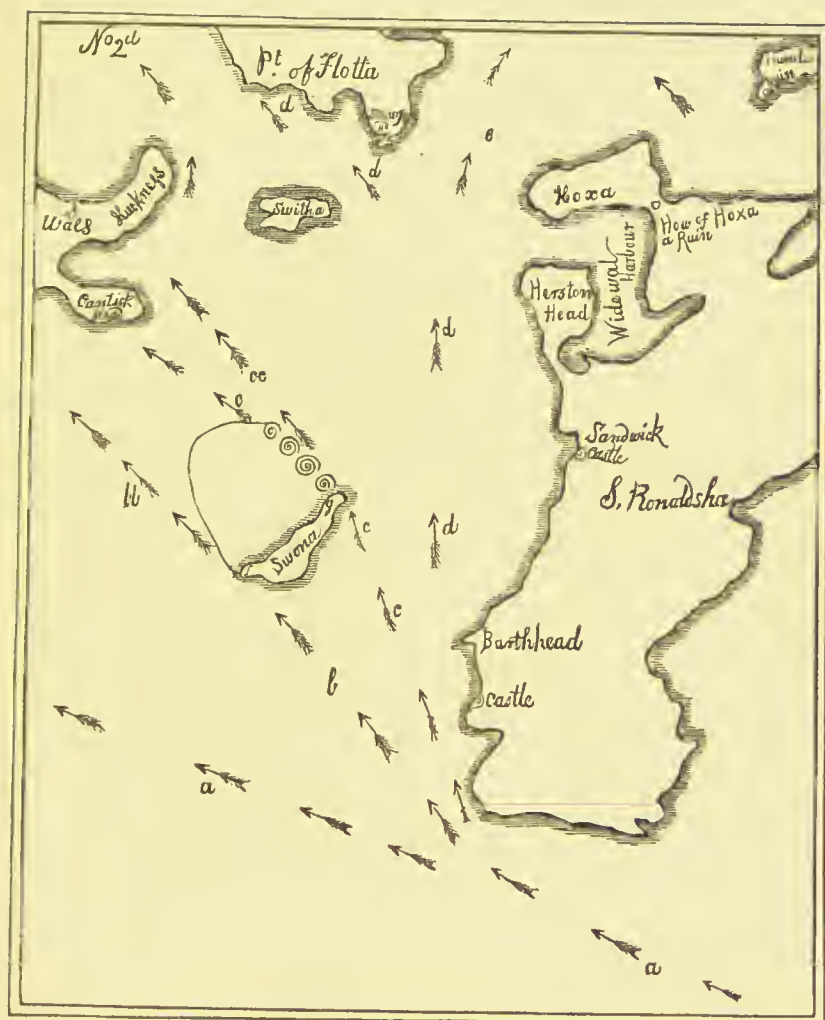
At the north and south end of Swona the tide sets off with vast rapidity, as the strength of the Pightland Firth stream is broken by it, being the first considerable stop it meets with both with flood and ebb. This rapidity of the tide and the depth of the water, together with the particular position of the island, which exactly crosses the stream, contribute to form the whirlpools called the Wells of Swona, so long famous for the alledged danger in passing over or near them. Much has been said concerning these Wells, and different accounts have been given of them, some telling us they are occasioned "by some Hiatus in the earth below," others "that there may be some secret conveyance thro' the rugged rocks, into caverns at the bottom, from which they may pass into some other places, where they rise again, and that even in the same firth," &c.

I should think the plainest account of the matter is this. The tide setting from the westward thro' the Pightland Firth meets with little or no resistance till it arrives at Swona, where, striking on the southermost point, it acquires new vigour, and sets off for S. Ronaldsha with vast force, but as it is held in on the firth side by the main stream, and finds little or no resistance on the side towards the eddy of Swona, this must naturally cause a wheel in such a rapid current, which will immediately begin at the sharp corner of the island, and continue to whirl in a greater or lesser degree (according to the time of the tide) till it gets a good distance from the island into calmer water, and loses the velocity it had acquired at the point it set off from. This first whirl will be succeeded by another, the second by a third, and so on as long as the stream has sufficient force to form them, and accordingly it is true in fact, that this phenomenon does not appear in any degree till the tide has acquired some strength in the sound, and growing stronger as the tide becomes so, dies away sometime before high water, when all is calm till the turn of the tide, at which time the very same thing is repeated, and for the same reasons, at the other corner of the island. With the ebb, the tide sets down upon Swona from the S.E., and the strength of that part of the stream running thro' the sounds of Flotta &c. towards Hoy, and keeping between Swona and Barth head, must occasion the very same thing to happen in the western eddy as the flood did in the eastern, and this we see to be exactly the case, for the whirl sets off immediately as the tide makes, for Cantick head, in the same manner as it did before for S. Ronaldsha. Follows a drawing which may help to make what has been said better understood.











## EXPLANATION OF THE SCHEME, NO. 1ST.

In No. 1st, *a* is the main tide of the Pightland Firth; *b* that edge of it that sets by the south side of Waes, and bears strait down upon Swona, and that reinforced by *c c*, a part of the stream of Hoy sound, which runs south by Hackness in Waes and splits on the back of Swona, one part assisting to form the Wells on the south side, *h*, while the other forms a small whirl on the north end of the island, *i*, the effect of which is very much taken off by *d*, a part of the stream of Switha which sets down on S. Ronaldsha, but meeting with resistance there, runs broad off, and falls almost parallel to the long side of the island of Swona, and can have no such effect as the stronger current has at the other, where it strikes almost at right angles, and finds little or nothing to divert it. For tho' the united streams *c c* and *d* might have some influence this way, yet this is much taken off by the course of that stream after union, as also by the shape of the island, the point *l* of which covers the Wells and forms a pretty large eddy in which they play.

At the tide of ebb, (*Vide* No. 2d) the effect will be much the same, but in a contrary direction; for here the main tide *a*, setting to the westward, part of it will be drawn by the sounds from its true direction *a a*, and run in that marked *b, b b*, strait upon the south end of Swona *f*; but when it comes there, instead of being inclined towards the eddy, as would naturally be the case if nothing hindered, here it feels the indraught of the Waes Firth, which rather diverts it from, than turns it towards the eddy of Swona.

Again that part of the stream *b*, which is next S. Ronaldsha, being more attracted by the sound between it and Swona, and in its passage along the S. Ronaldsha shore meeting with the Lothar, it springs from thence with vast rapidity, and proceeds N.W., according to the course of the sound, till it meets with the point *g* of Swona, which in some measure alters its direction, as it is at the same time drawn by the Pightland Firth, but very much increases its rapidity, causing it to run off in whirls from this point of the island in the very same manner it did at the other in the former case. This must here also necessarily happen, as the stream *c* is closely held in, as well by the draught of the Firth, as by the partial current *c c*, both which hinder it from spreading on that side, but meeting with no resistance on the side towards the eddy, it finds itself more at liberty: however its acquired force does not allow it to spread at once, it therefore spends this force in forming these whirls so much wondered at, tho' in a word there is nothing so very admirable with respect to the formation of such a phenomenon as this, it must necessarily follow in every similar circumstance, and is no more to be wondered at here than when we see, in a quick running river, an eddy formed by a rock or stone, in which such whirls are as observable as here, tho' in miniature, and have the very same effect on straws and other light bodies which come within their vortices as the Wells of Swona have on small boats, &c.

So true it is, that the same thing happens in every similar circumstance, I believe there is scarce a point among the isles where the tide comes near, and runs with rapidity, but this is observable in a greater or lesser degree, but it is particularly so at the north point of Stroma, where the

Swelehie runs off with vast rapidity and dreadful whirling, tho' indeed not so regular as Swona, but enough to show that the same cause will produce the same effect.

So much for the nature of the Wells. The diameter of the whirls very much depends upon accident, for when the wind blows hard they are scarce observable farther than by an irregular whirl of the tide, in a dead calm they are clearest, but in this respect I was something unlucky, the whole time I was on the island the wind was high, so that I could not observe the whirls so exactly formed as the boatmen told me they are wont; but the foregoing are the thoughts that were suggested to me upon viewing the situation of the island, the run of the different tides, and the rapidity of their motions, which, whether they are just or not, must be submitted. Farther observations may be made which may clear up what is deficient in these.

Notwithstanding the many lugubrious stories we hear told of these Wells, I have heard of no accident happening in them these many years, and indeed I am afraid their power of swallowing up ships, boats, &c., has been a good deal magnified, for tho' I believe they might be able to overturn a very small boat, they can have no such effect on a ship, as has been often experienced by people who have fallen into them, and have indeed been hurried away by the force of the stream, but this was the greatest inconveniency they felt from them.

The love of future fame finds a place in the breast of a Swona fisherman as well as an Ægyptian prince, and in both seems to manifest itself the same way; I observed on the north end of Swona a pretty high pillar built it seems

by a Swona-man, who designed it for a memorial of himself, and the inhabitants do it all manner of justice.

Vast quantities of Coalfish are caught round Swona, particularly near the Wells, which in this respect are no inconvenience, but rather a happiness, as near them the fishermen find not only the best but the greatest number of fish, which they take care to improve.

### S. RONALDSHA.

Repassed the Sound, and *Th. May 12th*, proceeded along the west coast of S. Ronaldsha, and in my way to Herston head observed a small rock fort in Sandwiek having the remains of a rampart towards the land, the dimensions very small, has been, like most others round the coast, circular, but not so much as a foundation stone remaining. Tradition calls it Lady Wemyss' Castle, but for what reason is not mentioned; possibly this appellation is mistaken, and belongs rather to a ruin still to be seen at some distance, and which bears marks of a more modern structure, but whether there was ever such a Lady in this part of the world I cannot, from the oldest inhabitants, learn.

In my way over the hills saw some tumuli, the old men called them Earny eouligs, the meaning of which they could not explain.

Reached Herston head, a highland with the usual common sea-fowl in its cliffs, but none remarkable; vast caves in it, some of which reach far underground, but incapable of being searched to the bottom, as they grow narrow, and lights will not burn after a certain space as I am well informed by people who have attempted to explore them.



Saw several spots of good ground for tillage near the head and round Widewall harbour, but not comparable to the east side of the island. In fine S. Ronaldsha, though the heart of the island be brakish, thin, and mossy, scarce affording even pasture for cattle, and almost destitute of fuel, part of which they are forced to fetch from the neighbouring isles, is the granary of the south isles; the skirts are well laboured and give great plenty of Corn, with which they supply Kirkwal and Stromness, particularly the latter.

The people of S. Ronaldsha and Waes differ much in their tone and manner of speaking from the mainland of Orkney, more approaching that of the Cathnesians than the people of Orkney.

#### BURRA.

*Friday, May 13th.*—Crossed for Burra over Watersound, thro' which ships commonly run for the southward or westward, and often find it more convenient than Holmsound, tho' the passage is not so clear, the rock called Lippa lying near its entrance; however all inconveniences in sailing thro' the Orkney isles may be easily guarded against by the use of McKenzie's excellent maps, which may direct the greatest blunderer that ever sailed if he only knows the card from the compass, and is in the least attentive to his directions.

Found a very kindly reception from Mr Sangster, Sir Laurence Dundas' factor for Burra, in which he directed me to every particular worth seeing.

This island is from east to west about three miles, from south to north very unequal, at the greatest breadth about two, about one half or something more of which is inhabited

and either in corn grounds or laid down with rye grass, which last has been tried in many parts of Orkney and seems to succeed very well.

The soil of Burra is various; the east side is altogether a light driving sand, which last particuar is much assisted by multitudes of Rabbit holes, which sets the sand a moving, and can scarce be restrained, notwithstanding the great care of the present overseer, who takes every method to put a stop to this, but without much effect.

The farm called the Bue (in Seotland Mains) is under the management of the Factor for the estate, and indeed here I saw the first improvements in the Orkneys; the whole farm is inclosed and parted into subdivisions by stone and earth fences, and laid down with Dutch white clover and rye grass, which at this season, notwithstanding the bad weather, looks well, and promises a fine crop of hay. In other inclosures of natural grass, and where the former is much worn out, he keeps about 50 or 60 Cows, and rears half that number of Calves; Butter he sells at 9*d.* or 12*d.* ʒ lb., 22 oz. to the lb., and Cheese at ʒ stone or 16 lb.; Hay, when he can spare any, which he often can, besides keeping his cattle, is sold here at 6*d.* ʒ stone, which shows that these articles are far from being low in Orkney; indeed every article of living within these late years has risen surprisingly, insomuch that since the time that honest Brand wrote, many things have risen to a half more, and in others the price is trebled and often more. A good Cow, which then was sold for £5 Scots, will now give £15 to £18; a Sheep then at 20*sh.* Scots (1*sh.* 8*d.* Ster.) will now give thrie the money; a Hen then at 2*d.* or 2½*d.* Ster. is now at 4*d.*; a Goose which not long ago was worth no more

than 5*d.* or 6*d.* now sells for 1*sh.* Ster. Oysters (which he says with truth are bigger than the generality of those got to the southward) then sold at 4*d.* 7<sup>p</sup> hundred, now give 1*sh.* or 1*sh.* and 2*d.* Ster., and almost everything else in proportion, owing to the greater resort of strangers to these isles. But to return.

Tho' the rest of Burra is naturally fertile, and the farmers have such a good example of improvement set them, yet they seem altogether averse to follow it, but drudge on in their old way, even tho' they plainly see the advantage good management has over their clumsy method of proceeding; but this is altogether the genius of the commons of Orkney, which is to be altogether averse to change in the least tittle the manners or usages of their fathers, tho' plainly for the better. The only thing I can see the south isles have improved in from the rest of Orkney is in the use of a two stilted plow instead of the common Orkney one, which shall be described in the history of the mainland.

As the surface of Burra is fertile, so is the sea around it; the ordinary kinds of fishes are frequent here as elsewhere thro' the south isles. Vast numbers of Corncrakes and myriads of Stares in Burra.

Minerals and indications of mines are frequent in it; at the south side of the island was shown a sort of mineral which Mr Sangster told me produced Lead and some small proportion of Silver, but it should seem not so much as to encourage the working of it, and indeed it seems to be fuller of sulphur than silver. At the west end of the island are plain indications of Copper, and this so easily procured as encouraged Sir Laurence Dundas to send down a set of miners to work it; however it proved but a poor ore, and

was given over. I saw some of the ore; it was but light, sprinkled over with a green matter like verdigreese, and on some of the pieees fine blue ehrystals of eopper or vitriol. Mr Sangster showed me some of the finer ore which was heavy and good, as also a pieee of the smelted metal, which is very good, and well coloured. He told me that in breaking thro' a erumbling sort of roek in working it, they found the pure virgin eopper in the appearanee of leaves and sprigs of trees, aecording as it had wrought itself thro' the fissures of the stone. Where the miners dug, it has all the appearanee of a large vein, confined on each side by a pretty thiek partition of a sort of fuller's earth which entirely separates it from the rocks on each side.

On the top of the bank and round the whole west end of the island is a most exeellent Peat Moss, which not only supplies most of the next inhabitants of Burra, but a good part of S. Ronaldsha. It is about 9 feet deep, and as the people take eare to eut it strait to the bottom, there is no where that one can better observe the different degrees of solidity this substanece aequires at different depths, and the gradual change the reliquiæ of the moss plants as they acquire more of the bitumenous or sulphureous partieles, with the last of which the lowermost peats are so loaded that there is searee any burning them on aecount of their pungent smell, and the sulphureous flame they emit.

Burra abounds in Rabbits, but the profit made by the flesh and skins of these is by no means compensated by the damage they do in boring the sandy grounds and subjecting them to blowing.

Having employed Friday and Saturday in Burra, Mr

Sangster was so obliging as to conduct me to the adjacent small isles ; and accordingly

## HUNDA.

*Monday, May 16th.*—Went to Hunda, a small uninhabited holm, and only used for pasturing sheep ; however it seems not very well fitted even for that, the grass is bad, much overrun with Moss (here called fog) and the plant Sea gilliflower (*Statice armeria*), neither of which allow grass to spring near them.

Hunda is inhabited by several species of wild seafowl, as Great Terns, Sea Pies, and as I was informed by Mr Sangster, by a bird called Alamonti, which by his description and what I have before heard of it must be the Storm Finch or Little Petrel, (*Procellaria pelagica*) Br. Zool. 434. No. 3, but as yet it had not made its appearance ; it frequents however in the breeding season many other of the Orkney holms.

The Slygoose (*anus tadorna*) and sometimes the Dunter or Eider Duck build here, but the Rittock or Great Tern is the most numerous species. Burra joins with Hunda by a shallow reif, which is overflowed at high water, but may be passed at low water dry shod. On the point that looks towards Hoxa we see still the ruins of a circular building much resembling but much less than that we observed at Hoxa in S. Ronaldsha, and near it the ruins of some walls of very ordinary houses, but which seem to have no concern with the hillock or ruin. What is now to be seen of most of these I have yet had occasion to examine, appears nothing more than a confused heap of rubbish, except in



some a small part of the foundation can be traced. but this is rare. This is full in view of Hoxa, and is of use to continue the communication thro' the south isles, for a signal put up on Hoxa of any ship or what else in the Pightland Firth or sea around, could be seen at Hunda, which is in sight of a small work of the same kind in Burra, but with the addition of a rampart yet discernable; from Burra the signal is immediately seen at Castle howe in Holm, and this is seen by many others thro' the coasts of the mainland.

### GLIMSHOLM.

Next to Hunda lies Glimsholm, likewise uninhabited; maintains a great number of Sheep and a few Cattle, has excellent pasture for the former, but they are much infested by a small species of Eagle or Erne (*Vultur albicilla* Lin. Syst. 123) Br. Zool. 131, which carries off the lambs, and that to the distance of three or four miles, for it is with the greatest truth observable that the Eagle never preys near her own nest, an observation long ago made and confirmed by daily experience.

The same birds in Glimsholm as in Hunda, with this addition, that Stares breed here in the hollows of moorish earth in thousands, the first time I ever saw them build in the earth. They make a large nest of feathers and other warm materials a good way under the earth, in the clefts made by the sun and weather.

### LAMBHOLM.

Passed to Lambholm, the next small isle, inhabited by a



single family, who hold what cultivated ground is in the isle; the soil seems to be good and yields well, but the isle possesses nothing extraordinary or deserving a particular description.

Left Burra and crossed for Holm, where finding no opportunity for Schetland proposed to make a tour of the east-side of the mainland and isles, which I have not these eight days been able to perform on account of the badness of the weather, which has been such as not to allow travelling by sea or land.

In this interval employed myself in sketching out my field drawings, and copying my journal from my scattered notes.

#### COPINSHA.

*Mony., May 30th.*—Visited Copinsha, about a mile long, towards the mainland low, and a small part of it cultivated, the habitation of two families; the sea side of the island altogether tremendous rocks about 50 fathoms high, the resort of millions of wildfowl, with which every shelf is so covered that it is impossible to figure a greater quantity. Observed Auks in 1000s., Skouts in like numbers, Cormorants, Shags, Taistes, Gulls of various kinds, and a single pair of a large species of Hawk which the people told me build in one spot of the rock and have done so past memory of man. This kind is much valued and sought after by the falconer, who gives the people 5*sh.* for the nest, which they procure by letting one another over the precipice. The old Hawks kept at such a distance that it was impossible to know them with any certainty, the people told me they have a white band round their neck, by their appearance I

imagined them to be the *Falco peregrinus niger* All: or the Peregrine Faleon of the Br. Zol. 136. By climbing, the inhabitants procure vast numbers of eggs of all the different seafowl that frequent the rock, some of which are very large, particularly those of the Auk, which are a grey or greenish ground spotted with blotches of black; the Guillemot's eggs are something of the same colour, but very differently spotted in different eggs; the Taiste or Black Guillemot like the rest lays but one egg, but not as the others on the bare rock, she makes her nest in the clefts of the rocks, or in the holes of the earth. A young man I employed shewed me the bird on her egg, and with the help of a running snare tied to the rod of my gun, in a moment pulled her out, together with her egg, which was a dirty olive spotted with darker shades of the same. None of the sea birds can take flight from the land, except from a very considerable height; this bird could not raise herself so as to get away from the plain ground, nay even when I placed her on a wall 6 feet high, she soon fell to the ground after flying about 20 paces; however when I placed her in sight of the water, by the help of feet and wings she outstript my Spaniel and went off. Some of the larger Gulls make vast destruction among the eggs, hundreds of which they bring to the rock head and suck them: this is done by the Herring and Great Black and White Gulls. Near the east end of the rock the Kittiwakes build, mostly by themselves, and there the whole surface of it is white, as in the other mottled black and white. The different harsh dissonant screams of the various birds is not disagreeable, and adds much to the wildness of the scene.

The inhabitants get vast quantities of feathers, which

they sell for about 8*d.* or 9*d.* ʒ lb. Of old they paid a rent for the rock, but of late this has been given up to them, and indeed I think the danger they run in getting their prey is a sufficient tax upon it. The manner of proceeding in catching sea-fowl in Copinsha is as follows:—A boy, well fastened to a pretty thick rope, is turned over the brink of the rock quite out of sight of those who support him, who place themselves at some distance from the edge, and support themselves by placing their feet in small hollows formed by continual labour. The boy, as soon as he comes where the birds or eggs are, immediately secures his prey, and when loaded, by signs which those above understand, informs them how to direct the rope, when to lower and when to pull up. He is furnished in particular places with a staff, by which he defends himself from friction on the rugged rocks; but nothing can be more dreadful than to see from below one let over the top of these cliffs, the bare sight of which makes most people unaccustomed with these places to shudder, but the rockmen walk on the very edges with the greatest unconcern.

Went next to Copinsha holms, the first of which called the Cornholm on account of its being cultivated, and sometimes the Kirkholm because of its small chapel. About half a mile in length, joined to Copinsha by a long reif which is dry at half tide, produces excellent grain, but like the isle very liable to sea gust, which sometimes destroys the whole crop. The Chapel, a small building 17 feet long and 15 wide, the walls 5 feet thick but low, and the door so low as to oblige one to stoop in entering. Near it is a deep well, well built within side with large stones, and has a stair to reach the water when it grows low as in summer.

At some distance the obscure foundations of small buildings, possibly the cells of ecclesiasticks.

In the head or southermost point saw several ruinous buildings which appeared to have been circular, but now only heaps of stones ; they surely were placed here to communicate the alarm from the Wart or Watch Tower of Roseness, in Holm, to the Mulhead of Deerness, and by being so placed left no necessity for any round the shores ; accordingly we find none between Roseness, in Holm, and the Mulhead, except in one place, the particular circumstances of which shall be taken notice of afterwards in our description of the mainland. Near these ruins saw a quarry of a grey Slate, much worn thro' by ehinks, filled up with spar, and on that account of little use in building, but curious on account of the many beautiful figures of seaweeds found between the plates. These figures are most elegantly drawn, and represent a vast variety of weeds, few like them now to be found ; they are painted of a brassy colour, and many of them very clear, even to the smallest fibres. The other small holm is a rock covered with a fine carpet of grass and daisies, the rock of a dismal black colour, which made the owner imagine it an indication of coal mines ; however this I imagine not to be the case, as with the strictest search both here and elsewhere I have not been able to discover anything having much of the nature of coal. Indeed in some places we find a black stone with a shining enamel, which burns with a pretty clear flame as long as that enamel lasts, but when that is consumed, remains a heavy lump of stone. The rocks of these holms abound with the *Ligusticum Scoticum* in vast plenty.

The Horse of Copinsha is a high rock capable of main-

taining a few Sheep, frequented by a few sea birds, but abounds with fine fishing grounds for Coal fish round it.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE SOUTH ISLES.

As these isles are very different with regard to their soils, situation, and appearance, so different advantages might be reaped from each of them according to their particular circumstances. Hoy and Walls are fit for pasture only, and therefore are advantageous for keeping sheep, and young cattle in summer. Being situate on the Pightland Firth, and West Sea, with industry fishing might flourish, but this seems to be much at a stand, and no further prosecuted than for present necessity. South Waes is only fit for corn and fishing, being entirely destitute of hills for flocks or fuel. Flotta has both, and is excellently situated for fishing Cod, Haddock, and Coal fish, but particularly Lobsters, many thousands of which might be yearly caught here if they could be sold, which is only the case in some seasons when they are purchased by the London fishmongers. They are caught in small nets baited with any kind of garbage, which they very readily bite, and are hauled up in the net. The fishing continues till the time the Lobsters cast their shell, when it is intermitted till they recover. They are very frequent round all the coasts of Orkney.

South Ronaldsha has little pasture but a great deal of corn, and in no place do Potatoes thrive better than here; its fishings, too, would not be despicable, as it lies well to



both Pightland Firth and the German Ocean, had the inhabitants any industry, but this is greatly wanting here as well as elsewhere. Burra and the small isles around maintain numbers of Sheep, but have little shelter for them in winter, which is a great loss for the owner, as they are never housed nor protected in any wise from the greatest storms.

In the S. Isles are three Ministries, Hoy, Waes, and South Ronaldsha; the former containing Hoy properly so called and Græmsay. Waes contains North and South Waes, Flotta, and Fara; and the Ministry of South Ronaldsha has Burra and Swona; each of these Ministries being supplied by one Minister, having two or three Kirks, in which he preaches by turns.

### HOLM.

As there was still no opportunity for Schetland, I employed several days in traversing the eastern parishes of the mainland, the first of which from Burra is Holm, which is bounded by St. Andrews and Deerness on the North East and East, by Kirkwal on the N.W., and by Holmsound, which divides it from the S. Isles, on the other sides. It is about four miles in length and one in breadth, containing about 160 families and about 1000 people. The soil, as in the whole mainland, various, but in general thin; however there is a great deal of arable ground, producing small Oats and Bear or Big, and a large quantity of Flax; the cultivation of the last, and manufacturing it into ordinary Linnen is greatly encouraged by the present proprietor, who not



only brings home seed, lint-wheels and reels\* to be distributed among the people, but assists them in bringing their cloth to market by taking it in payment of land-rent, &c., which is a great drawback upon many other species of industries in other parts of the country, in that they cannot bring their commodities to a proper sale. Some part of the Linnen made in this Parish is carried to Schetland, where it sells well either for money or barter. They likewise send thither Meal and Malt, and have in return Fish, Wool, coarse Stockings, &c. In general the people of this Parish are industrious, rather more so than their neighbours, owing to a greater commerce with the world, in which all of them have small ventures, and this gives them a more enterprising spirit than the rest of the Orcadians, and makes them readier to enter into any scheme which may be conducive to their interest. Great part of this parish is Moss, which yields fine Peat and shelter for Moorfowl, Plover, Redshank, Lapwing, and I have heard of straying Woodcocks found here, but this cannot affirm with certainty, as I myself have never observed any of this species in Orkney. Feldfares are frequent here in autumn; they come in small flocks of half-a-dozen, but continue very shy till they go off. I have shot several Godwits about the shores of Holm, being not at all shy, and easily come at; this species is but scarce in Orkney, flying in flocks of a dozen, only seen in winter.

In the Parish of Holm we observe many vestiges of

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\* Lint-wheels, reels, &c., are annually given by the Society appointed for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, &c., to be distributed among those who are not able to purchase these articles.

antiquity, particularly Pights' houses, the ruins of several yet appearing round the shores, in the form of pretty large hillocks, called by the inhabitants Howies, as Castle-howie, which continues the communication from Burra to this part of the mainland, and thence to Roseness, where a large Cairn of stones indicates another, which conveyed notice of any thing remarkable in an instant to the Corn-holms of Copiusha, from whence (as I said before) they had a sight of several others of the same kind.\*

Roseness-head, in Holm, is remarkable for a pretty large cavern, or rude natural arch, into which the sea beats every tide; this proceeds for about 30 yards under the rocks, when it communicates with the open air by a large circular spiracle, very dangerous either for men or cattle, as it is not observable at any great distance, and the inhabitants, tho' they sometimes meet with small losses from it, yet take no pains to wall it in.

### DEERNESS.

The next Parish to Holm eastward is Deerness, the road leading by the brinks of several pretty high rocks (frequented by the ordinary kinds of sea fowl, and numbers of Rock pigeons) and several tolerable spots of arable grounds, till one comes to a very remarkable Pights' castle, now called Dingyshow, situate on the Aire at the Head of Deersound or Harbour. This is one of these we may call irregularly situated, or only to serve a particular purpose.

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\* In Holm, too, are many tumuli or barrows, differing in nothing from these found thro' the rest of the mainland.

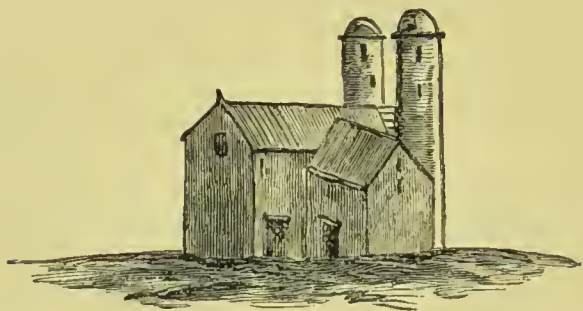
and, as the How of Hoxa seems to have been designed to explore the transactions in Widewal Harbour, &c. (*Vide* p. 22) so this commands an extensive view of the East Sea, and the very extensive harbour of Deersound. It is now entirely in ruins.

Deerness Parish is a peninsula of four miles long by three broad, at its greatest breadth, inhabited by 130 families or 705 souls, including the two Copinsha families which belong to this Parish. Round the shores of this Parish sand prevails most, farther up it is meadow and boggy, and the highest parts are a thin gravel, produces a good deal of Corn and natural Grass, and here, as in Holm, they sow a good deal of Flax.

The only Gentleman's seat now in this Parish is that belonging to Mr Covingtree of Newark, built by John, Lord Kinclaven, Earl of Carriek. Several other seats, now in ruin, are yet to be seen, particularly the House of Sandside, where the following remarkable inscription is still visible, on a chimney-piece, "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings."

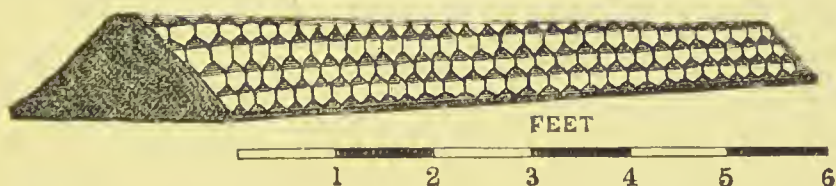
The Church of Deerness is very remarkable, and part of it looks to be pretty ancient: the east end consists of a vault which crosses the breadth of the inside, and at each side of this is erected a small steeple. Thro' the vault or quire one enters the steeple on his right hand, and by a turnpike stair goes to a small apartment or vestry built between the steeples. From this last apartment he enters the second tower, which, or both probably, have had bells; these are now gone, said to have been carried away by Cromwell's soldiers. Tradition is not clear (and there are no records) who was the builder of this Church. The

steeples are said to be monumental, and placed over a Lady's two sons buried there, but whether this is so or not is hard to determine. As this is the most remarkable country Kirk in these isles, I have added a sketch of it as follows.



In the Churchyard observed a coffin-shaped stone without any inscription, the shape a triangular prism, one side plain, the other cut into such figures as the Heralds call Vairy. Tradition is silent to whom it belonged, but there

is another\* of the very same dimensions, and carved with the same figures; the latter goes by the name of the Queen of Morrocco's grave stone, anent whose arrival and death they here tell us a long apocryphal story not worth repeating. See the figure.



At some distance from the Church is the Gloup, a vast cavern like that of Roseness, in Holm, but much larger. It proceeds from the sea for about 40 yards of a large covered arch, when it opens in a yawning hole 80 yards long and 20 broad, the sea dashing to the innermost end, having its sides and the benches of the rocks covered with grass, which often tempts the cattle to their destruction.

The Mul of Deerness is at about a mile's distance from the Church, a large peninsulated rock, the access very difficult; on the top is a small Chapel, to which, notwithstanding the danger, even old age scrambled its way thro' a road in many places not six inches broad, where certain death attended a slip, but such was the force of superstition! Towards the land this rock is fenced with a very strong

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\* The last is at Rendale, in an uncultivated spot of ground, about 20 miles distance from Deerness.



stone wall, and within many foundations of small huts, which plainly demonstrate that this has served more purposes than that of religion, which in all probability has been but the latest. Like that in Stroma (*Vide* p. 17) it surely has been a rock fort, many more of which are observable thro' these isles, and the huts have been for shelter both to men and goods in times of publick disturbance, which of old was far from being infrequent. In the neighbourhood of the Mul is the Mulhead, a perpendicular rock, in which the most remarkable inhabitants are a couple of Sea Eagles which time immemorial have possessed it without disturbance.

On the top of this rock, and for a considerable way round, is a most excellent Moss for Peat, and tho' now there is scarce a sprig of heath to be seen alive, yet we see everywhere thro' the Peat the reliquiæ of a very large size; some pieces I measured were near  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. in diameter. Tradition says here were deer, and thence the name, but this is scarce probable, at least for these many Centuries.

To the northwest of the Mulhead opens the spacious harbour of Deersound, capable of containing the most numerous fleets, but not much frequented except by the Iceland fishing fleet, which some time ago consisted of between 20 and 30 sail, and constantly touched here to hire some part of their hands, and trade with the people for fresh provisions, feathers, stockings, gloves, linnen, white stuff, and the like, but for sometime past this branch of trade seems to have failed, and instead of 20 or odd sail, for these several years not above 4 or 5 have come this way, which on many considerations is a heavy loss to the inhabitants of this part of the country, as they not only



afforded them summer's employment, but sale for their manufactures.

Elf Arrow heads pretty frequent here, but most of them with the points broken.

### ST. ANDREWS.

Opposite to Deerness, crossing the Sound, lies St. Andrews Parish, both in one Ministry. St. Andrews is four miles long and as many broad, bounded on three sides by the sea, and on the W. and S.W. by the Parishes of St. Ola and Holm. It contains 150 families or 810 souls, the greater part of the Parish uncultivated, and here, as elsewhere, but little encouragement for improvement. Sea ware every where used for manure where it can be had. The face of the country here black and heathy, affording shelter for Moorfowl in plenty, and such other birds as delight in this kind of soil. No wood of any kind can be made to grow, the lowest and most common shrub with the greatest difficulty, tho' it is very observable even under the flat sea beach, where the storms or other accidents wash off the gravel and sand, that black moss such as is proper for peat, and that stuek thro' with large trees, seems to have been the original soil. The whole tree is there, both root and branch, the smallest fibres still so strong as to bear lifting. Trees likewise in many places thro' the deeper moor, and farther from the sea, are still dug up, which seems to indiate that the country has not *ab initio* been the same as now.

At a short distanee from the Minister's Manse we observed a small loch, well frequented by Duck of different

kinds, and inhabited by Eels only, but these are altogether despised by the country people, who never eat any of them, owing to a ridiculous notion they have of their being bred from the tail hairs of a Stalion; and their resemblance to the Serpentine race; so that it is probable what are left by the Wild fowl, prey upon one another. On a small neck of dry land which juts into this loch we see the remains of a building of the same form with those so frequent on the shores, but altogether in a heap of ruins. There are several more of these at some distance from the sea, as shall be observed in course. St. Andrews is not so well situate for fishing as Deerness, where they catch a few Cod, Skate, Haddock, Halibut, Coal fish in numbers, and a very few Ling; Cockles small sized, but in great abundance, and Oysters not infrequent in Deersound. On the Sands of Deersound are found myriads of Plover, numbers of Curleus, Sea Larks, Sea Pies on the more rocky parts, a sort of Goose, called by the inhabitants\* Horra Goose, of which I could get no further description but that it is a large grey bird, with a hoarse cry, appears only in spring and fall, in large flocks of 200, but does not continue long; what further I can make out concerning it shall be thrown into a note.

Small bits of Lead ore are sometimes found in this parish, but little appearance of a mine; neither have the proprietors made any trial or search hitherto, at least in this part of the country; neither do I think it has such a good appearance for mines as some places else in Orkney.

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\* Perhaps the Urgiæ. *Vide* Pontop Nat. His. Nor. Pt. II., p. 75.

## KIRKWAL.

Kirkwal Parish, to which is joined that of St. Ola, is bounded by St. Andrews and Holm to the E. and S.E.; on the N. the Sound, which divides it from Shapinsha. Firth and Orphir bound it on the West. It contains, in the town of Kirkwal and country parish, about 1500 souls. The cure on account of Kirkwal is served by two Ministers, officiating by turns.

The most remarkable particulars in this parish are the Town and Church of Kirkwal. The latter is built on an isthmus near the middle of the Mainland; commands a view of the sounds on both sides. It is a place of great antiquity; under the Danes it bore the name of Cracovicia and Kirkiuvog, whence the modern name; consists of a single street of near a mile in length, narrow except at the market place, where there is a large opening with a public well, for the conveniency of the inhabitants. The Houses are stone, some of them pretty neat both within and without, many of them having good gardens belonging to them, in which all kinds of garden stuffs thrive in great perfection, except fruit, for tho' they have some wall trees, they produce but ordinary apples. One observes a few Ashes in the Palace garden, but they are crooked and much deformed by knots, which renders the wood good for nothing. The publick buildings in Kirkwal are, a Town House supported on pillars in front, a neat building in which the Sheriff's and other Courts are held, and the assembly in their proper halls of the middle storey: below is the common Prison, and in the upper the Masons' lodge, &c.

Near the town house is a low building for Schools, where Grammar, English, Writing, and Arithmetic are taught by two masters, the former supported by a fund for that purpose, the English, &c., master by subscription. In Kirkwal are kept the Customhouse and Postoffice for the county; and here the Store for the Superiors of Orkney's rents, great part of which are paid in kind, and from thence transported by the factor or merchant tacksmen to the proper market.

The Mount or fort taken notice of by Wallace is still in being, tho' much in ruins: it has not been so regular as his draught shews it, being a sort of square, the corners something like bastions, but these not well defined. A few of the cannon belonging to it are still there, but dismounted. One of them has a double coat of arms, I suppose that of the Common-wealth of England, and brought thither in Oliver's time. These are the ordinary publick edifices, but what strikes the eye of a stranger first, and most engages his attention, is the Cathedral or Church of St. Magnus, a beautiful and magnificent pile founded by Rognvald, Earl of Orkney, about the year eleven hundred and thirty eight, but since enlarged by others, especially by Bishops Stewart and Ried, who lengthened it both to the east and west; the latter beautified the front by some fine carved work of foliage, &c.

The whole structure is a plain Gothick building supported by 28 pillars, 14 on each side, 15 feet round, besides the 4 supporting the Steeple, 24 feet round. The roof curiously vaulted, I mean what is finished of it, for part seems to have been left unfinished by the builder. The additions which have been made to this building have

thrown it out of proportion, the length far exceeding the proper breadth and height: The length outside 226 feet; breadth 56 feet; height from the floor to the top of the Steeple about 140; of the main roof 71; East window 12 feet broad, 36 high; that to the westward the same. The Steeple is but low in proportion, having been reduced in its dimensions when burned down in 1670. It contains three Bells, the largest of which having suffered by the fire, was recast in Holland, but by all accounts less than formerly, scarce deep enough for the other two, which are ancient, with Danish or Norwegian inscriptions. Besides these there is a small Bell, rung only in cases of fire. The Steeple is likewise furnished with a good Clock, to remind the good Citizens of their latter end, and point out to them the divisions of time.

In an Isle of this Church, the annual provincial Synod meets for the regulation of the general affairs of the Church thro' the county. Here also the Presbytery of Kirkwall hold their dyets for the dispatch of particular business within their own bounds.

In one end of this Church divine service is performed, the other half is quite empty, used only for a burying ground, full of monuments, none of them remarkable, and all of them modern. In affixing one of these to a pillar, the workman struck his tool into a square hollow, containing a quantity of human bones, tied up with ribbands; in all probability the reliques of St. Magnus, part of whose bones are said to have been deposited here, and perhaps never disturbed till now.

The other buildings which in time past have been remarkable, are the Castle, the Earl's and Bishop's Palaces.

The Castle, built by Henry, Lord Sinclair, the first Nobleman of that name in Orkney, about the year 1379, is now quite in ruins, and scarce to be distinguished. Near the Cathedral, to the S., we see the ruins of what they call the round tower, or the old Bishop's Palace, said to be built by Bishop Reid, together with some other buildings, which he designed for a College,\* in which the youth of the time were to be taught the branches of learning then in vogue, now turned into dwelling houses.

Near the round tower, which forms one side of the court, stands what remains of the Earl's Palace, commonly called the Bishop's, because after the forfeiture and death of the Earl of Orkney (then Patrick Stewart) it was given to the Bishops as their dwelling house in Kirkwal. This building is not yet so much in ruins as the others, and appears to have been erected by the foresaid Patrick Stewart, the last of the name Earls of Orkney, in the year 1606, the arms, date, with P.S.E.O., being yet to be seen above the gate, which tell the builder. It has been a fine building, but now going as fast to ruin as men and time can send it.

Kirkwal can boast of a pretty high antiquity, even in the times of the Danes it was of some note, and by them erected into a Royal Burgh; and since their times, these Charters have been confirmed by several of the Kings of Scotland, as in 1486, when James III. gave them a charter of confirmation upon their old erection, specifying their antiquity, empowering them to hold Burgh Courts within their own district, to arrest and imprison, to make laws

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\* This is the common opinion, but it is more probable it was designed for the Clergy belonging more immediately to the Cathedral.



for the government of the town, and to choose their own magistrates yearly. By their Charter they had power of Pit, and Gallows (as it is called in Scotland), but this has been long discontinued, and all criminals are now carried to Inverness, the most northerly place of the circuit which the Justiciary Lords make, there to be tried before them. They of old had two weekly markets, on Tuesday and Friday, but these are discontinued: they had likewise three fairs in the year, one at Palmsunday, another at Lambmass, and a third at Martinmass; but none of these are now observed except that at Lambmass, which is still held in August for four or five days, instead of the three days each of the rest. No particular commodity at this fair, it consists mostly of a sale of family necessaries, with cattle, sheep, and lambs. Some time ago this was a famous fair for young horses, great numbers of which were brought hither from the northern shires of Scotland, but this trade has of late much failed, owing to the Orkney farmers having got over their prejudices, and raising horses from their own mares, which till of late was not the case.

King James the fifth ratified the Charter of Kirkwal in 1536, by a new charter of confirmation, and in the year 1661 Charles II., after his Restoration, ratified the former Charters by his royal signature, dated Whitehall, May 25th. Upon which the Scottish Parliament met at Edinburgh in August 1670, confirmed all by their Act, with this special provision, "That what was granted them by that Act, might not prejudice the interest of the Bishops of Orkney."

Kirkwal, as other burghs in Scotland, is governed by a Provost, four Bailies, a Treasurer, whose business it is to look to the town lands and profits arising from them, &c.,

and a Dean of Guild to inspect the weights, measures, and assizes of provisions; these are assisted by a Council of Burgesses sixteen in number. On extraordinary occasions they muster and arm a town guard, consisting of tradespeople, for keeping the peace, especially in time of the fair, when such a concourse of people are assembled from all corners of Orkney and the north of Scotland.

Here once in five Parliaments a member is chosen to serve for Kirkwal, Tain, Dornock, Wick, and Dingwal, all which have a casting vote in their turns.

Kirkwal road or harbour is rather open, but has good anchor ground, is not much frequented except by ships which have very particular business there. It is the station of the English Herring Busses, who put in here to hire part of their crews for the coast of Schetland herring fishery. They commonly arrive so as to reach Lerwick a few days before the 24th of June, which is the day they first wet their nets. In one of these vessels took passage for Schetland, and

### VOYAGE TO SCHETLAND.

*Friday, June 17th.*—Left Kirkwal, steering our course between Shapinsha and the main. When opposite to Stronsa observed numbers of Stormfinches skimming about the ship, but tho' the calmness of the weather afforded a fine opportunity of shooting them, having no boat, (busses never carrying boats) I could not have got them on board. They keep ever on the wing, dipping their bills in the water as if catching insects. Their shape like that of a Starling, the colour black, except the rump, which is white.

*Saturday, June 18th.*—Still calm; made very little way; however the Fair-isle began to appear, Sanda and North Ronaldsha looking like threads along the surface of the water, tho' we sailed within a few miles of them, which is the cause of great loss of shipping every year, and none more remarkable than last season, when ships and cargoes to the value of near £100,000 Sterling were lost there.

By afternoon the wind began to blow a little, and we made some way, the Fair-isle rising out of the water every mile we advanced, and when we were almost up with it began to descry the high land of Fitfil-head in Schetland. I proposed if any of the Fair-isle boats had come on board, as they usually do to sell fish, to have gone ashore, but none coming was forced to continue my route straight for Schetland. By 1 o'Clock Sunday morning we were almost abreast of Sunburgh head, with a clear view of the whole south part of the country, which indeed affords no very prepossessing appearance, the whole vista consisting of ranges of dreary wilds, black and dismal mountains, whose tops are covered with almost perpetual fogs, their sides swampy bogs, without either good heath or shrub; the rocks in most places being the only support the eye has under the general dusk, which sticking thro' the sides of the hills is a sort of variety in this wretched prospect.

### LERWICK.

Proceeded by Mousa with a fine small breeze, thro' Brassa-sound, and at 5 o'Clock in the morning June 19th arrived at Lerwick, where I the same day preached to a

pretty numerous congregation, composed of the inhabitants of the town and country parish, formerly a part of the parish of Tingwal, but disjoined since Brand's time.

The village commonly called the town of Lerwiek is situate on a sound of the sea, formed by the island of Brassa, and thence the name; capable of containing many hundreds of ships: at this time there were about 400 Busses of several nations, as Danes, Prussians, French, Ostenders, but the greatest number Dutch, whose share alone amounted to upwards of 200 sail; with *two* English and *one* Scotch vessel, and one belonging to the town, all these on the herring fishery.

Lerwiek is a small irregularly built village, containing about 140 families, a great decrease indeed since Brand's time, who says there were between 200 and 300; but in this I should think he is mistaken, for I can see no reason to think that the houses in Lerwiek have been more numerous at any former period than they are now. Lerwiek has no street, but a sort of road leading from one end to the other, and that in some places so narrow as to require a wall to hinder people from falling into the sea. Most of the houses are well built, some three story high, and properly furnished within, to keep their outsides in countenance. The most remarkable building is a new Town-House, a neat fabrick with a small spire, but no clock. Here the Sheriff or Steward substitute holds his courts, and under it is the common Prison. The Citadel has never been finished, but in case of publick disturbance has the command of the whole Sound, and might soon be put in such repair as render it highly useful for the protection of the fishing trade particularly.

Here they have a Custom House, with proper officers for managing such business as pertains to them. They are mostly employed by the fishermen in keeping account of their salt, inspecting and loading fish, the proper produce of the Country.

The country round Lerwick is a desert, barren, unimprovable rock, only here and there a small spot scraped out for a garden or a very small enclosure, in which, however, Garden stuff, Corns, Clover, and Rye grass thrive surprisingly well, but all this only by force, and scraping the one foot of the surface to thicken the other. As this is the time in which the greatest resort of Busses happens thro' the year, it always occasions a vast concourse of people from all quarters to Lerwick. I now had the best opportunity that could be wished to see the various particulars of the Schetland traffick with the strangers. The whole time the fleet lay the country people flocked to Lerwick with loads of coarse Stockings, Gloves, Night caps, Rugs, and a very few articles of fresh provision. Several thousand pounds are annually drawn for the first article, tho' a pair of stockings seldom sells for more than 6*d.* or 8*d.*; I don't say but they make finer stockings than these, having been informed of a pair of stockings made in Lerwick and sold at 36*sh.* ster., but the most valuable for the country in general, and the most profitable, are the coarse ones, of one very thick thread, which consumes a great deal of wool, but requires not a great deal of labour. The country folks are very smart in their bargains with the Dutch; they are now paid in money for everything, no such thing as formerly trucking one commodity for another; almost all of them speak as much Dutch, Danish, and



Norwegian as serves the purpose of buying and selling, nay some of them speak these languages, especially the low Dutch, fluently.

Rugs are a sort of earpet stuff used sometimes for coverlids to beds, where people consult warmth more than beauty, or cleanliness; for they are very apt to gather and retain dust. These seem peculiar to Schetland, are made of different coloured worsteds, sewed on a very coarse ground, of various figures, sometimes in imitation of carpets, and sell from 16 or 18*sh.* to 2 Guineas, according to the goodness of the pattern and the colours.

The Schetland commodities are paid for in all the coins of the north, and indeed nowhere will a British stranger be more at a loss than among the vast variety of small and great found commonly current here.

On a moor at the back of the town observed a number of people, each holding a Sheltie or two. These come daily to Lerwiek while the fleet continues, and make a good deal of money by hiring to the Dutch at a Stiver a mile. They are much employed, as riding is prescribed by the Dutch doctor as a corrector and preventative against such diseases as befall people that have been long confined on shipboard.

Here I had an excellent opportunity of viewing the little Schetland Pownies, which are not specifically different from other horses, but rendered the least of the European species by hard treatment. Buchanan calls them *Equulei Orcadenses et Schetlandici* *asino haud majores, laboris patientissimi*; but tho' they are now confined to the latter, they preserve their character of excellent work-beasts, capable of enduring much fatigue, and, for their size, strong; the least of them carrying double, tho' to tell



the truth it is a too great load. The least I could see on the moor was 35 inches high. They are much bought by strangers as curiosities, and for children; the price variable, from 20 to 50*sh.* Ster., which has risen much of late years, for of old they might have been bought from 5*sh.* to 20*sh.* the highest.

At this season happens the annual meeting of the Clergy of Schetland, at Lerwick; staid therefore till the end of the week, to get acquainted with them, as I was to take them in their turns as I passed thro' their parishes. While here picked up what I could concerning the Herring and Cod fishing, as carried on by strangers on the Schetland coast, as follows. The Herring fishing is carried on by Busses and Doggers, the greatest number of these from N. and S. Holland, from different ports of which there have been about 300 sail, tho' in former times many more. These sail from Holland about the 15th of June, and if the wind prove favourable, rendezvous at Brassa Sound. Here, as was said, they are of great service to the inhabitants, by laying out money for their manufactures, and besides, as none of the Busses carry a boat, each must be attended by a country Yawl, which likewise fetches money.

On the 23rd all the Dutch, Danish, English, and Scotch Busses were in motion (the Prussians, French, and Flemings having gone to sea several days before), and in the evening put to sea, none of them daring to stir sooner. The Dutch have from 30 to 35 Doggers (commonly the best sailers), called Jaggars or Yaggars, purposely for running home with the first caught herrings. They are numbered 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, &c.; and if the first Jagger can get 10 barrels among the fleet the first night, she proceeds home immediately,

where nothing is more common than to sell the first herrings for £50 <sup>ƒ</sup> barrel, as every individual almost in the eastern countries look on the first fruits of this fishery as medicine. When the first Jagger arrives, a present of her cargo is immediately sent to the Princee of Orange, and then every one who can may purchase. The first three Jaggers go to Holland, the 4th to Hamburgh; the others sail as they get cargoes, the last being obliged (for they are all freighted vessels) to stay on the coast till the 15th July, if she does not get a full loading sooner. Every one has her station, and tho' the fishing Busses belong to different companies, yet in dispatching the Jaggers they take from every Buss what herring she has got, and account to each other at home as they are sold. In a word, every partieular is made subservient to the good of the whole. After the Jaggers are all dispatched, the Busses continue the fishing till they too make cargoes, when they return home, and either return to Sehetland in harvest or spring on the Herring or Cod fishing. In the beginning of the season they fish off the middle of the Sehetland isles, but as the season advances they follow the herrings to the southward as far as Buchan-ness. Some years ago they used to fish off the Yarmouth Banks, but this seems to be discontinued, because they get more herrings here than they have markets for.\*

To attend the fishing fleet, there are two pretty large ships, called by the Dutch "Convoyers," but the real use of them seems to be Hospital-ships. They have a few guns

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\* For a proof of this, since writing the above, we have certain accounts that herrings are now (Augt. 1774) selling 5 or 6 Guilders a barrel.

for saluting, &c., but are of little force. Both are furnished with a doctor, carpenters, and materials of every kind, in case of losses or other accidents happening to their fishermen. In case of sickness, the disabled hands are put on board the Convoyer, and an equal number taken out of her, which are again put on board on their recovery; in case of loss of nets, these are furnished in like manner. These ships exchange stations once every fortnight, that is to say one lies in Lerwick Road, and the other goes to sea, relieving one another, so that the Busses always know where to find assistance.

For some years past the Danes had from 25 to 30 sail of Busses fitted out from Altona for this coast, these keep the same time for setting their nets as the Dutch: but this is not the case with the Prussians from Embden, the French and some others, who fish six days earlier. This practice, however, ought to be curbed, as very destructive to the fishing, for it not only breaks the fish, but is the means that they are taken at a time when they are improper for curing; and it is very surprising, tho' observable to the most inattentive, what a vast difference a few days make on the herring at this season.

Besides the Herring Busses the Dutch send out many Doggers on the Cod fishing. These are going and coming from early spring thro' the whole summer. They are fitted out in this manner:—The owner of the Dogger lays in provision, salt, and casks, which is paid for out of the first returns of the voyage; about a fourth of what remains is the property of the owner of the Dogger; and the remainder is divided among the crew. Each Dogger has ten men and two boys, the half of which sleep while the other are

employed in fishing. As soon as they catch a cod they cut its throat, and soon after split it and lay it in salt: every man salting and packing his own barrel, as they all go on no purchase, no pay. When these fishermen come first on the coast they use the lesser Lamprey for bait, kept alive in fresh water wells on board; and continually stirred (which is done by the boys) while in harbour, to keep them in motion, otherwise they immediately die, but at sea this is done by the motion of the ship. They prefer this kind of bait to all other for a cod, but when they fail, each of the Doggers are provided with eight herring nets for catching herrings after the month of June comes in. To hinder the too rapid motion of the vessel, which would hinder their lines from taking the bottom, each has what they call a drove sail, or one which hangs under water, and effectually stops her way, and they can pursue their business at leisure.

In all publick Dutch writs the Herring fishing is called the Great Fisherie, whilst all others are called only the Small Fisheries. These people give the greatest encouragement of any to fishings of all kinds, and their premiums are fitted to make their people alert and brisk at their business, such as the vast price given for the first herrings; as also to enable them to live cheap, for all provisions, and every other material used in the different fishings, are entirely duty-free, and subject to no toll; only a most strict account is required of every article not expended.

Cod-fish sell from 30 to 40 Guilders a barrel when herring will not fetch six.

Every part of a Dutch vessel is kept very clean, the same neatness reigns at sea, among them, as at home; which is far from being the case among the generality of

the British fishermen or coasters, but is surely most conducive to the health of people confined so long to such a wavering element as the sea.

The people of Lerwick in general are gay, wear fine clothes, follow the south country fashions in their outmost extent, at least as far as they can; however, I cannot say there is so much dissipation among the young people here as even in Orkney. Of old the Schetland gentry were remarkable for bedizening themselves with lace and other trinkets, but this is now much worn out, and plainness seems to be as much studied here as elsewhere.

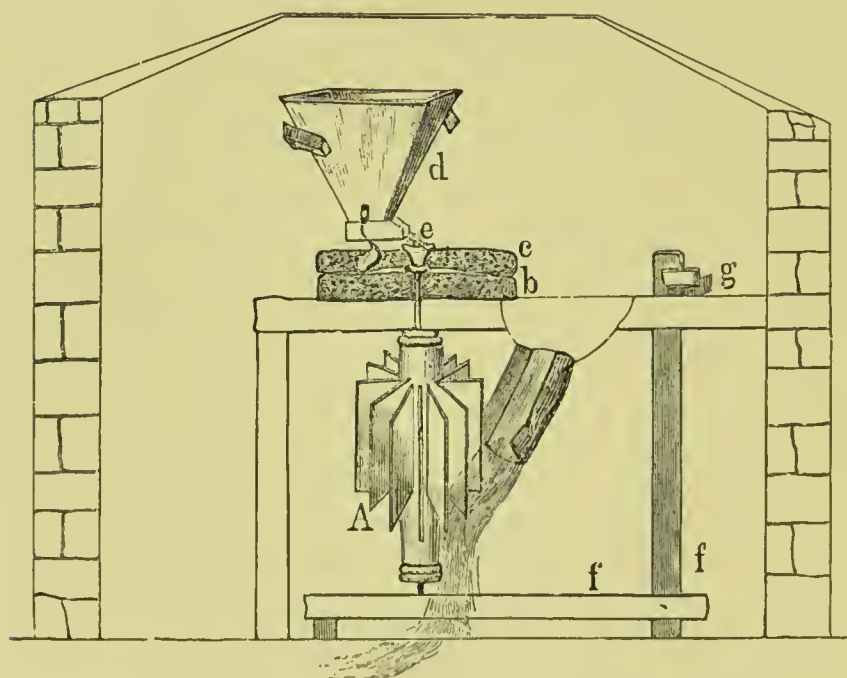
Lerwick is a place of but little trade farther than what is carried on for country consumption, and this cannot be much, as the narrowness of the country does not permit it; and besides most or all of the gentry being engaged in the fish trade, import their own necessities in return. A Packet-boat goes about 5 times in the year between Lerwick and Leith, carrying goods and letters, but the former mostly confined to family necessities, materials for house-building, &c.

The Harbour of Lerwick or Brassa Sound is well sheltered by high lands all round, the water deep, but the bottom much ploughed; the south entrance is near half a mile broad, the north narrow, and not without danger from small shoals and blind rocks, but these are all well known to the people who frequent this sound.

At about a mile's distance from Lerwick, to the westward, in a loch, we observe the first Pight's castle, but in ruins; it has had a sort of bridge of stepping stones to the small isle on which it stands, but now impassable. To the westward is Sound and Gulberwick, two small but beautiful



spots, pretty well cultivated in the Schetlandick style. Here I saw the first Schetland mill for grinding Oats and Bear, but this it does in but a clumsy manner, little better than a hand-mill or quern, only it saves hand labour. It consists of a very simple set of machinery; a small horizontal wheel for the water to play on, the top of its axis runs thro' the lower and supports the upper stone as in other water-mills; a hopper and shoe with a leaver to level the upper stone completes the apparatus.



#### EXPLANATION.

A. The Water Wheel; b. The Under Stone; c. The Upper Stone; d. The Hopper; e. The Shoe, for restraining the corn lest it should run too fast out of the Hopper. To it is fastened a small log of wood which, striking upon the unevennesses of the stone, makes the corn run out; f. f. The Leaver; g. its Wedge.



## SCALLOWAY.

*Friday, June 24th.*—The fleet now all gone: set out for Scalloway, the next place of note in Schetland, on the west side of the country, distance 4 miles of true Schetland road from Lerwick. The country quite uninhabited after you pass about two miles from Lerwick till one comes to the Strath mouth of Tingwal: the road lying over the mountains, and thro' deep peat mosses, makes travelling not only wearisome but dangerous.

Scalloway consists of about 60 very ordinary houses, inhabited for the most part by fishermen. It seems much decayed, no modern buildings of any worth, except one or two. The Castle, a large and strong building, the walls yet pretty entire, but nothing very remarkable in it more than in others of the same age. Brand tells us it was built “upon the sandy foundation of oppression,” and indeed most of the Schetlanders complain of this to these times. They tell us they are yet subjected to many taxes laid on them at the time of the building of this castle, as the Ox-penny, or a tax laid on every Ox; the Sheep-penny, the tax on Sheep, and this besides their manual labour in carrying burdens at the time of building, &c. The inscription taken notice of by Brand is in part still legible, the rest has fallen off by the exfoliation of the freestone. (*Vide* Brand, p. 90.\*)

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\* “*Patricius Orchadiæ et Zetlandiæ Comes, and below the inscription this Distich, Cujus fundamen saxum est, domus illa manebit; Labilis e contra si sit arena, perit.* That House whose Foundation is on a Rock shall stand; But if on the Sand it shall fall.”

Was shewn a fine strong rill of fresh water on the beach of Scalloway within flood mark, running from a hole of a rock, probably the same taken notice of by Mr Brand, p. 123, which, he says, if you stop, the water forces its way thro' the pores of the stone, it being very spongy; but this is far from being the case, for it is a very close-grained limestone; the water however is good, and when unmixed with salt-water is very convenient for the neighbouring inhabitants, who in general are not very well supplied with this article, at least in its purest and most elementary state; most of their water being much tinged with moss, which much discolours it, and must render it unhealthful.

## TRONDRA.

Opposite to Scalloway lies Trondra, which helps to form the harbour, and renders it secure from the sea. It is about 2 miles, or something more, long, but the breadth unequal. The end next Scalloway only inhabited by a few families; has tolerable spots of arable and meadow grounds, but the former much hurt by rocks, which everywhere stick thro' the surface, even in the midst of the best cornfields, and the evil is they are so plenty there is no removing them.

At a small distance from Scalloway stands Westshore, a seat belonging Sir John Mitchell, Bart. The house stands in a small hollow, and has nothing remarkable in it; but the garden, tho' small, seems the best wooded of any I had yet seen in these isles, the trees growing much above the walls, which is not often the case either here or in Orkney, except a few ashes in the Castle garden of Kirkwall.

## TINGWAL.

Struck up for two miles thro' the Strath of Tingwal, said to be the finest in the country; it may be so, but I cannot see wherein its boasted beauty consists. It is a narrow valley, cultivated indeed and well furnished with meadow grounds for grass, but these so deformed with rocks as not only spoil its appearance but its use, and put a stop to every kind of improvement; besides, it is cooped in on both sides by black and dismal hills, which indeed render the verdure of the valley more cheerful to the inhabitants, but to a stranger give the whole a dark and gloomy cast, which even the vaunted beauty of the bottom cannot support.

As you go towards the Church observe an obelisk or stone pillar of the same kind with those in Orkney, and set up probably on a similar occasion; what traditions the country people have about it may be seen in Brand, but the latter of these, concerning the Earl of Orkney's profligate son, not probable. Near the Minister's house is the loch in which was the Ting or ancient Court of Justice, in a small Holm; but such is the penury of land capable of improvement even in this, said to be the finest spot in Schetland, that the Holm is now appropriated to this purpose, tho' scarce 30 yards in diamr., and the stones of the Ting or Forum are torn up and displaced. They have been of the kind which authors call "Stones to sit on," and tradition informs us here sat the Fowd or Judge and other officers of the Court; the entry to which was by stepping stones, which indeed still remain. The Church of Tingwal

has the appearance of some antiquity, its steeple is tolerable workmanship, but no date ; the stones seem to have been brought from a great distance, at least I could observe no quarry of the same kind near ; the whole rocks of the Strath being limestone, a broad bend of which crosses the whole country. At each end of the Strath is a good harbour, namely, Scalloway at the south, and Laxfirth Voe to the north, but neither of them much frequented.

### WHITENESS.

*Saturday, June 25th.*—Crossed the country westward, thro' the Parish of Whiteness, joined to that of Tingwal. This day's walk afforded no great matter worth mentioning. The country cut into large Voes or Lochs, which, tho' seemingly inconvenient for travellers, are far from being so with respect to the inhabitants, who are commonly placed on their borders, and sustain themselves by their fish thro' that part of the year the weather hinders them from going farther to sea. This Parish contains two pretty large lochs, Ustaness-voe and Stromness-voe, between which there are long Nesses running to the sea, affording good pasture and some arable lands. About Ustaness was told of some appearances of Lead Ore, but this in such small quantity as gives no great encouragement to work it. Here I cannot help observing how much the imagination is relieved even by small things ; in travelling over the Schetland mountains of this part of the country, one on one hand sees nothing but the dismal prospect of lofty ridges scarce covered with any thing else than mosses and liverworts, and here and there patches of a sort of rough bent grass ; on the other,

these scrapes of Schetland improvements, dearly won from the bosoms of their rocks, yet these very scrapes, which would scarce be taken notice of elsewhere, here contribute much to mend the view and give the country a habitable look which otherwise would certainly be doubtful. The country all this way but very thinly inhabited, except on the banks of the Voes only, and even there the houses mean and scattered.

In the mountains of Schetland the snows continue rather longer than in Orkney, owing to the greater extent of the mainland, and their more numerous hills. Vast gullies are hollowed out thro' them by the winter water tracts, which in summer form large quagmires, which renders travelling both tiresome and dangerous; however, the Schetland people generally obviate these difficulties by travelling mostly by water, by far less fatiguing and more expeditious, as in a journey of 50 miles, by the situation of the numerous Voes, they are seldom obliged to travel 10 by land, and their small Norway boats either row or sail with vast expedition, being navigated in the Voes by 2 or 3 men, each rowing a couple of short paddles, which has almost the same effect on these skiffs as six oars on a larger boat.

### WISDALE.

Entered Wisdale Parish, remarkable for the superstitious regard aneiently paid by the more ignorant inhabitants to its Church. Those people who for a small sum wanted to clear off their old scores, thought they could do it nowhere better than here, they also thought here their works of penance would be more acceptable. I was well informed

that not many years ago there was found on the pulpit of this Church a small pyramid of all the different coins generally current in Schetland, from the largest German silver coin down to a stiver. This superstition is, however, now much wearing out, particularly since the death of an old Smith, who found it his interest to keep the roof on this Church after it began to decay, and to preach up the miraculous effects which visits (especially when the visitor came not empty handed) might produce on the credulous. The Church is now in ruins, and the people are part of the ministry of Tingwal.

Crossed Wisdale-voe, a good harbour, but not much used, except by a few Orkney boats who come here to traffic with the inhabitants of this and the neighbouring parishes, bringing meal and linen, which they barter for wool, money, a few stockings, and other commodities of the country.

### AITHSTING AND SANDSTING.

Searee touched Aithsting Parish, as but a small point of it lies this way. Passed Bixeter-voe, which runs 6 or 7 miles up the country in a serpentine form, full of fish of different kinds, particularly good Oysters, and several other shell-fish, tho' but few Lobsters, which it seems are not frequent in Schetland, which is the more remarkable, as nowhere are they more plentiful than in Orkney. Coekles, too, seem not plentiful in these parts, and are generally despised as a food, and that by all ranks.

In the evening landed in Sandsting, which joined with the former, Aithsting, makes a Parish. Lay at the Minister's, who gave the following answers to the printed queries I had formerly furnished all of them with:—



“The air of this parish is like the rest of Schetland, raw, damp, and foggy. Sometimes very remarkable phænomena happen here, as a few years ago in the Parish of Aithsting, after a very violent storm of thunder and lightning, about half an acre of ground, three or four feet deep, was bared to the channel.”

“As to long lived people, we have two men in the parish of Aithsting of 94 years of age, and one 100. A woman died lately in that parish 125 years old. All artificers here are self-taught, and some of them very ingenious in their way.”

“The present number of inhabitants is 1220; seem rather on the increase.”

“No kind of grain raised here except Barley, Bear, and Oats, sufficient in good years to supply the wants of the inhabitants only. The manures used are sea-ware, but generally ashes of peat mixed with cow-dung, which is in great esteem. Potatoes are likewise cultivated, and a little Flax, but no Hemp.”

“Great numbers of Sheep and Horses are sent annually out of this parish, but as there are no fairs, but every one sells in a private way, the precise number cannot be well ascertained.”

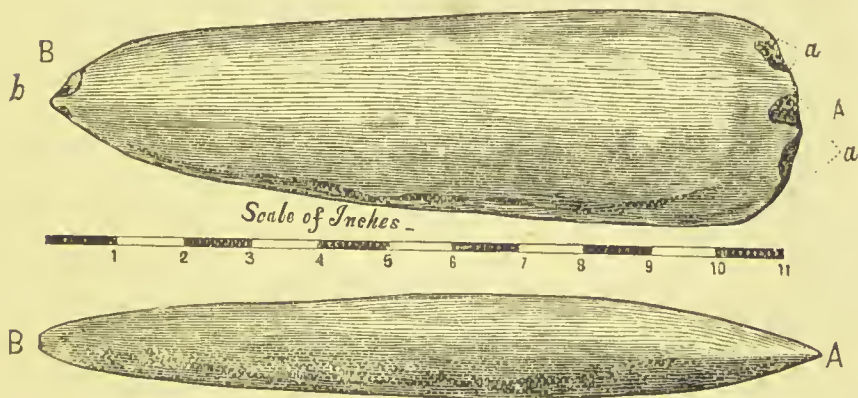
“Innumerable instances of superstition yet remain among the people of the lower class, *e.g.*, some of them neither eat nor drink on Sunday till after divine service. Others believe that if two infants, that have got no teeth, meet in the same room, one of them will die immediately after. If you praise their children or call them fat, they think you their worst enemy, and such children are certainly doomed to die. (*Vide supra* p. 7.) They firmly believe that if any

person is emaciated by sickness, or other accidental causes, that his or their heart is worn away; and they have a method of investigating whether it is so or not, or whether it shall be restored; which is this, they melt a piece of lead and throw it in cold water, and according to the shape it takes, so they form their judgment; if it takes the shape of a heart (their imaginations are pretty quick in helping out this and other kinds of augury both here and in Orkney), the person is not altogether gone, and he will recover, if otherwise, *vice versa*."

Witches and Fairies, and their histories, are still very frequent in Schetland, but Brownies seem, within this century, to lose ground. Their Festivals are Christmas, Newyearsday, Uphaliday (the last day of Yule), Bonny Sunday, Pease Sunday (Easter), Johnsmass (J. Baptist's), Lambmass, Candlemass, Hallowmass, &c., and to each of these they annex particular ceremonies, mostly drawn from the Popish times.

*Monday, June 27th.*—Waited on Sir John Mitchell at Sandhouse. The house small, but neatly furnished, with several pretty good family pictures. Here was shewn what in Schetland is called a thunderbolt, but by its shape proclaims itself designed for another purpose than to fright the world in general. It is a piece of a very close grained, hard stone, shaped into an axe-like form, well polished, having one end ground to an edge, the other rounded to a heel; seems to have served the same purpose as the axe of a halbard, and certainly has been used in war, both for striking and cutting. Sir John Mitchell's is pretty much broke in the edge, as if shivered by striking on some hard body, but I was informed by a gentleman in company that

they are found entire in several parts of the country, and even shaped differently from this: That 24 were found in one parish, and 7 in another, besides many single ones, but all under ground. The figure follows:—



#### EXPLANATION.

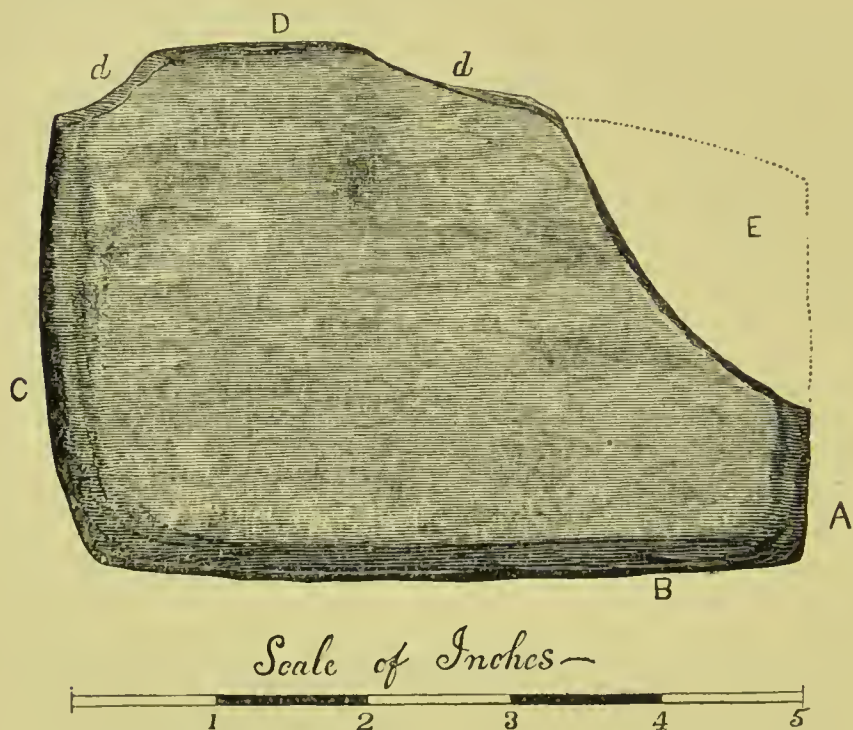
Fig. I.—A. The Cutting Edge; *a. a.* Splinters forced off by striking; B. The Pointed or Heel End; *b.* Bits struck off. II.—A. B. a Side View of the same Weapon.

Was shewn likewise a stone instrument quite differently shaped from that described on the other page. This was broad and thin, much shorter than the other; seemed to have been made use of as a knife, or instrument for cutting by the hand, as the other for striking. Its edges were all well sharpened, and was supposed by the owner\* to be a

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\* Mr Willm. Balfour of Trenaby, now resident in Schetland, a gentleman well skilled in the History of his Country, and very ready to communicate, of which I have had many instances.

knife made use of in Sacrifice. I procured one of the latter, the figure of which follows:—



The sides, A. B. & C., are well ground, and have a fine edge; D. is partly broke, as at *d. d.*, and the whole corner E. is recently broke off. The greatest thickness of this instrument is scarce three-tenths of an inch, the edges cancelled on both sides like a carpenter's axe.

Observed here some attempts towards improvement of the soil, however this has come no great length; and indeed there are many things against it in Schetland, viz., a backward soil and climate, and want of skill and inclination in all ranks, who rather neglect this branch too much; in the same manner as we in Orkney are at no pains about our fishery.

*Tuesday, June 28th.*—Ordered a boat to visit the small isles opposite to Selivoe. On the beach observed the *Pulmonaria offic.*, Fl. Suce. 163, in great plenty, as also on the dry hillocks all round the *Iasione montana*, 782; neither observed in Orkney. Selivoe is an excellent harbour or loch, full of different kinds of small fish—as Haddocks, Whittings, Cuths (here called Piltoeks), and at a certain season, *i.e.*, a week or two before Lambmass, swarms with such a glut of Maekrel that they may be caught in boatfulls by everyone that can wield a rod. In windy weather a bit of red rag is very good bait, which affords us a proverb that “women and maekrel are easily caught by a red elout.”

#### KIRKHOLM, &c.

The islands and holms of this day's trip are Kirkholm, uninhabited but by Cormorants and Gulls, several varieties of the former; one quite black except under the chin, which was dusky whitish; a second having the breast and belly spotted, called Lory; a third quite black except a spot on each thigh, seems to be the male of the first.\* At this time they were all hatching the young, now almost out of the egg. The Great Black and White, and the Herring, were the only species of the latter. The Holm abounds in grass, particularly vast quantities of Sorrell. Observed foundations of a great number of huts, placed in regular order, said to be these of the fishermen, when the larger kinds of fish were to be found nearer the land; but this not probable. In this small rock a well of good fresh water, which would

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\* Let it be observed that all these are much of the same bulk.



point out a better purpose that these numerous regular huts have served, namely being cut off from the land, and inaccessible on all sides without some danger. It is more rational to think this was one of the ancient natural forts the inhabitants withdrew themselves to in cases of publick disturbance, and we have seen several other rock heads fortified seemingly for the same purpose. (*Vide* p. 55 *supra*).

Many bare rocks round Kirkholm, one particularly curious, being worn by the sea to a perfect arch tho' but small, not exceeding 12 feet in diameter. The other Holms are Foreholm, for pasturing sheep, Sandstown, and a great number of Skerries round it quite uninhabited. Here was much disappointed, as I expected a large variety of birds, instead of which could only number the Sea Pie and Great Tern as resident, and the Cormorant and a few Gulls as visitors. The Sea Pie is not at all nice in the construction of her nest, a hollow rock, between two stones, or a small scratched hollow in the earth, when it can do no better, serves the purpose; lined with a few bits of grass, sometimes with her own dung. On this she lays four eggs, as do most of the class of waders, tho' there are some accidental variations. Hidesta is next, about a mile long, inhabited, but has nothing remarkable. In my return to Selivoe, saw one of the Whales called here Chaffers.\* It passed pretty nigh the boat, at a great rate; to appearance it was about 40 feet long, small grown to the tail, near which was a single fin. Frequents the mouths of the bays to feed on the smaller kinds of fish, particularly the herrings when

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\* Seemed to be the round lipped Whale of Br. Zool. 42.



they set into the voes, at other seasons coalfish seem to be its favourite meal.

The Plants in these small holms are long leaved Sorrel ; Sea Gilliflower ; sweet smelling Garlick very luxuriant ; also the *Lychnis dioica petalis rubris, et Balbis* ; the latter not observable in Orkney.

*Wednes., June 29th.*—Struck westwards thro' the Hills of Sandsting, the whole a swampy spongy marsh, much fitter for pasturage than tillage, accordingly they keep large flocks of Sheep, which are very advantageous in their manufactures of Stockings, &c., and of old were more so, but a few years ago a distemper got among their Sheep, said to be imported, which carried off the greatest part of them, and this they have not yet been able to recover.

### CULSWICK, &c.

Crossed by the head of Skeldvoe, a well fenced and good harbour, thro' Reawick, Gilderumple and Culswick, all tolerably well cultivated spots, of no great extent indeed, but well enough for Schetland ; a most excellent appearance of Oats and Bear, particularly the latter, which was strong and broad leaved. At about two miles' distance from Culswick, along the high rocks, observed the most entire Pight's castle on this side the country. It is situate on an eminence, commanding a most extensive view both of sea and land, at a small step from the entrance into Gruetingvoe, one of the most capacious harbours of the mainland. It is constructed of vast pieces of a very hard kind of white and red Granite, the produce of the rock on which it stands. The stones altogether rude, but strongly and close built ;

the wall double, with a sort of spiral passage, which one can creep thro' where it is not choaked up with ruins. No kind of cement has been used in building, and notwithstanding the walls are firm and entire, except where they have been pulled down by men. The passage is covered with long lintel stones which rest on both walls, and the floor of the one is the covering of the other.\* The entrance is by a little door about two feet high, thro' which one can crawl with some difficulty. Round the whole building, which is circular, is a ditch and rampart, which, together with its situation, render it strong in any age; but at the time when it was built, when regular attacks were not so much in fashion, it has been a fort of great consideration. Its dimensions follow, together with a plan, elevation and section.

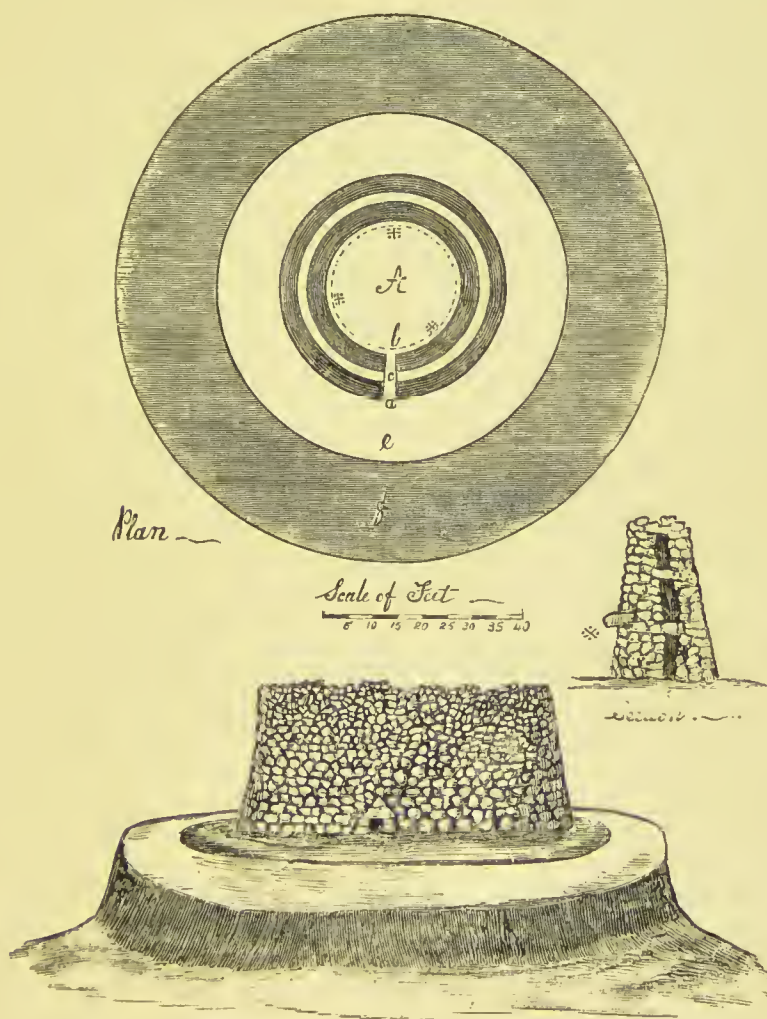
The Diameter within the inner wall . . . . .	Feet 26 6
Diameter taking both walls, or whole Diamr. at } the foundation . . . . .	44 0
Thickness of the inner wall . . . . .	3 6
Breadth of the passage . . . . .	2 0
Thickness of the outer wall . . . . .	4 0
Thickness of both walls at the foundn. . . . .	18 0
Height of the gallery or passage between the walls . . . . .	8 0
Height of the highest part as it now remains . . . . .	23 0
Breadth of the ditch . . . . .	13 0
Breadth of the rampart as it remains . . . . .	19 6

The ditch is now much filled up with rubbish; the rampart has been formed of earth and stones, of the same dimensions with the wall; looks now like a green mound. The door is strongly lintelled with a large triangular stone,

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\* By this is meant the main entry, or the entry to the body of the work; the entrance to the double wall will be explained afterwards.

which stands as firm as when put in, as would the whole fabrick, had it not been that many of the stones have been removed for house-building.



#### BURGH OF CULSWICK.—EXPLANATION.

PLAN.—A. The area ; *b*. The inner wall ; *c*. The passage between the walls ; *d*. The entrance and outer wall ; *e*. The ditch ; *f*. The rampart. SECTION.—× The galleries, with their lintels, one above another ; \* A sort of scarcement, as if designed for a flooring.

*Thursday, June 30th.*—Crossed Grueting-voe, a large and safe bay for shipping, forming itself into three branches, Selivoe, Olisvøe, and Broulandvøe, all good harbours, but very little frequented, as there is nothing here to draw ships from either the eastward or westward.

Observed as I came along a number of small houses, built of dry stone without mortar, and very open, designed for drying fish, called Skeos. Here likewise formerly they used to cure beef and mutton without salt, calling it Vivda, but this is much left off. Nothing can smell stronger than a number of these Skeos placed near one another, and this together with the natural foggs of the country must render it unhealthful and pernicious, particularly for strangers to live in. The inhabitants, and especially the lower class, don't seem to mind this; they are a hardy stalwart race, live well when ashore, that is to say, eat more animal food than perhaps any others of their rank in Europe, work hard when at sea, complain much of their Landlords that they don't give them worth their labour for their fish, and that they are forced out to sea from the time they are able to handle an oar; much out of humour on these accounts, and could they get themselves properly headed, I believe would emigrate from most parts of the country in shoals.

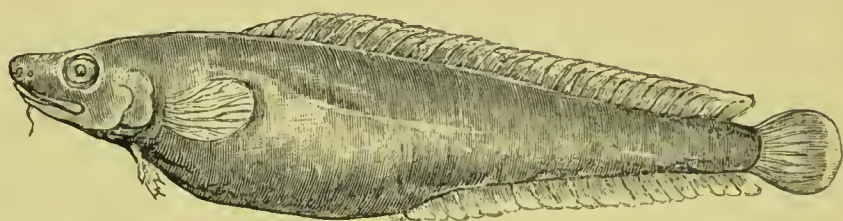
### VAILA.

Landed at Vaila, an island in the mouth of Grueting-voe, which it serves to cover from the westerly winds, and stretching along forms the excellent harbour of Lingasound. Vaila is more than a mile long, almost oval, surrounded on the sea-side with high rocks, tho' little inhabited by birds.

The human inhabitants consist of 6 families, who cultivate a small spot on the north end of the island. Here is a modern house and gardens belonging to Scott of Melbie, the proprietor, with a booth and every material for curing fish, many thousands of which are dried here annually for export. At this time the beach was covered with Cod, Tusk and Ling, which are the only marketable fish; some of the latter remarkably large, one in particular measured 5 feet 8 in. from the joint next the tail to the lug, as they call it, or pectoral fin, tho' these are seldom thick in proportion. The tusk is shaped much like the ling, and to an inattentive observer the difference when dry is not very apparent. It never grows so large, the biggest I could hear of being three feet and a half long, towards the shoulders thick, thin towards the tail, the colour when it comes out of the water yellow, particularly the back and sides, which grows fainter by degrees, till it loses itself in the dusky hue of the belly. The side line is scarce discernible when they have lain any time out of the water, because they grow slimy. The skin is thick and gluey. But what distinguishes this fish from all the rest of the genus is the back fin, which in this species is single, beginning at a small distance from the back of the head, and running the whole length of the back to within an inch of the tail; the tail broad and rounded; the anal fin begins at the vent and runs to the tail, but is not joined with its fin; the points of the back, anal, and tail fins are white, the rest dusky; the pectoral fins are rounded and brown; the ventral small, thick, and fleshy, ending in 4 small points or cirrhi. The belly is very tumid to the vent, beyond which the body much compressed into an eel-like shape. I had no opportunity



of weighing a wet specimen of the largest size, but a Bressa tusk, where they are generally largest, when dry weighs 6, 7, and sometimes near 8 lb. Tusk is a good eating fish; different tastes indeed prefer it different ways; I have eat it with pleasure both fresh and salted: when fresh I think it is rather tough, but more delicate than when dry. It swells much in boiling, and parts into flakes like salmon. This year sold in Sehetland at 13s. 6d. a quintal. Exported mostly to Leith and other parts of Britain; does not answer foreign markets so well as ling.



#### SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE TUSK, CALLED IN ORKNEY CATFISH.

Head small; eyes large; irides yellow; one beard under the chin; back pretty straight, with a deep groove running from the back of the head to the insertion of the back fin, which begins at about a third of its length from the nose, and is continued the whole length; the anal is continued to the tail; the tail rounded; rays of all the fins soft, general colour yellow, fins tipped with white.

Common Bear grows here with such luxuriancy that even at this season it was beginning to lodge, but in a good measure this was owing to the long continued rains of the season. All kinds of grain are here ready to sea-gust, owing to the high rocks which surround the coasts, and throw the spray amongst the fields; and if this happens



while the corns are green or in flower, spoils the crop for the year. It was formerly said no cat would live in Vaila; however this has been found a mistake, as mice have been some time ago introduced and thrive notably, so that the former are now become necessary.

A great deal of bog Iron in the mosses of Vaila. The country people dye a sort of black with the mossy earth and water, which is much impregnated with it.\*

Great quantities of the *Rhodiola rosea* in the rocks, as also the *Ligusticum Scoticum*.

#### WAES, &c.

Run up Lingasound, which contains several small holms, as Lingaholm, Holm of Bræbuster, and several others without names, kept only for pasturage. Lay at the Minister's, and

*Friday, July 1st.*—Took a turn thro' part of the Parish of Waes, seems to be pretty fertile round Lingasound. Numbers of burns run into the sea here, containing small Trout in great plenty. Lochs very frequent, tho' small; they tell us here their Parish has a loch for every day of the year. In one of these, near the Church, the remains of a Pight's castle still visible, tho' entirely in ruins, in sight of Culswick, and of the same dimensions as to the ground plan. It is called the Cumills of Curcagarth, which name signifies the "Heap near the House or Farm yielding Oats." At a mile's distance observed another likewise in a loch, called the Burgh of Burrowland, the dimensions the same, and

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\* *Vide* Pontop. Hist. Nor. p. 205, Note 2d.

likewise in ruins, but here the double wall still discernible, the foundation being to be traced all round ; as also toward the land-side a double rampart, and double wet ditch, with stepping stones still remaining to get in, both these particulars well defined, and evidently the works of art, coeval with the Burgh itself. The ditches are cut exactly circular and parallel to the body of the work, the ramparts are the same, with plain traces how the ditches were filled with water from the loch, which is the natural rampart on that side.

In the Churchyard of Waes observed many tolerably engraved monuments for the dead, having frequently a couple of Coats of Arms on the same stone, one for the husband another for the wife, no bad specimen of Schetlandic vanity. The epitaphs generally very flattering, scarce worth copying ; but for a taste.

“None more devout to God can Thule boast,  
 Not one more just to man hath Thule lost ;  
 No Father more benign and provident,  
 No Gentler Landlord e’er uplifted rent ;  
 No Judge more forward to protect the poor,  
 No Host to Stranger kept an opener door,  
 No Man more humble in a prosperous state,  
 Nor more courageous under adverse fate ;  
 No Kinder Husband e’er espous’d a bride,  
 Than he whose sacred relicts here abide.”

Lingasound was formerly one of the stations for the Eastlanders’ booths, when they brought over the commodities of their countries to traffic for Fish, &c., but now this is entirely given up. Here likewise the Irish used to fish on the shallows of Foula, coming at all seasons in their wherries ; but the Schetland people to this day blame them much for

hurting the fishing, by killing the great fish while full of roe, and spoiling the breed; and surely not without reason, for one fish killed at that season did more real damage to the fishing in general than a thousand in the proper fishing time.

### FOULA.

*Monday, July 4th.*—Took boat for Foula, situate 8 leagues from the nearest land, a small island about 3 miles long and 2 broad; surrounded on all sides by turbulent tides and dangerous rousts; but, notwithstanding of this, may be passed by skilful people in tolerable weather in the smallest Schetland Yawl, and that without the least danger. A great sea usually runs on the shallows, which are a large fishing ground about half way over, but this does not hinder the inhabitants from catching vast numbers of fine middle-sized Cod here, and indeed it is remarkable that where the greatest sea runs, or near the most dangerous roust, there the fish are to be found both largest and in greatest numbers. This we daily experience in the Rousts of Pightland Firth, Sumburgh Roust, round the Fair Isle, and nowhere more remarkably than round Foula. As we had but little wind it cost us seven hours' work to reach the island; and, on our landing, all the inhabitants within reach came down and welcomed us as strangers, shaking hands all round. Our boatmen and my servant were distributed among the different families of the isle, and I together with a gentleman who accompanied me had lodgings assigned in the Bailie's Booth, where in a short time we had everything for the table sent

us in plenty, such as fish of several kinds, fowls, milk, butter, and eggs, without any expence. When I offered to pay for what we had they were much affronted, and told me no such thing ever happened in Foula as to pay for eatables. They indeed are but poorly off for beds, this article we were obliged to carry with us. In all our walks thro' the island we found the doors open to receive us, and it was taken as a favour frankly to take a part of what was offered, and, indeed, hospitality seems to reign there still in its primitive state, unfetter'd by the niceties of form, or frivolities of custom. Their regard for strangers shews itself in nothing more than this, when I was taking my rounds thro' the different parts of the island, those that had not seen me before, tho' they were a quarter of a mile's distance, would come with the utmost speed to welcome me as a stranger, and shake hands; nor did they seem actuated by that prying curiosity so conspicuous elsewhere, but rather from simple kindness; for, when they had performed this (to them) so essential ceremony, they usually retired perfectly satisfied, very seldom indeed asking the least question as to the rest of the world, from which nature seems to have shut them off, and inclination seldom spurs them to visit, except the next land of Schetland. I am very far from saying, however, that it is want of spirit that hinders them from being more acquainted with their neighbours; this is not the case, for there have been many instances of three or four Foula men's going thence, in one of their yawls, as far as Kirkwal, in Orkney, which is more than 40 Leagues of a most turbulent ocean, and returning safe; but they seem contented with their own rock, and search no farther. Foula is very high land, and can be seen at a great distance from

the sea; the west coast consists of vast precipices\*; the east side lower, but in very few places accessible, except at the common landing place, which is so narrow that scarce can two boats get in at the same time. They have, indeed, a few other loops and coves into which boats may run in summer, but few would choose it unless Schetlandmen indeed! Since Brand's time Foula is a good deal improved as to the quantity of its Corn ground. They have now neat plantations in three places, and these increasing, but still their Corn scarce serves them. Potatoes have been lately introduced, and thrive very well, are a vast saving to the poor inhabitants in the article of meal, and agree very well with them when eaten with their fish, instead of bread. Oats and Bear thrive with vast luxuriancy, especially in the first cultivated spot, called Hame-town, where I observed likewise a fine meadow. All their grounds are wrought with the spade; no plough in Foula, tho' they have the strongest horses in Schetland, but it must be remembered that the Shelties are good for nothing in the plough; therefore the Schetlanders till all with oxen, using the same sort of plough as in Orkney. The uncultivated part of Foula is an entire hill, covered with the different kinds of moss grasses, mostly Carices, which affords good pasture for their Cattle, Horses and Sheep in summer, but in winter covered with snow, which here lies sometimes 6 or 8 weeks together, owing to the great height of their hills. These hills are surprisingly steep; the ascent is so steep

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\* This was the Thule of Tacitus which from its height was easily seen in the circumnavigation of the Orkneys by the Roman fleet. *Despecta est et Thule.* *Vite Vita Agricolaë.* How nearly is the name still preserved!



that one is forced to take fast hold of the heath to prevent tumbling down, as there is no such thing as stopping till he is dashed to pieces, as happened to a poor woman in gathering dye stuff a short time before I went there. The ascent towards the east, rocky and wild, shooting up into several summits; the westside highest, but suddenly broken off in a dreadful precipice, inhabited by myriads of sea fowl of different kinds, as Shags and Cormorants, on the lower benches, and the whole rock alive with Tomies, Lomvies or Guillimotes, Wilkies or Auks, and Tystes. The Lieres or Lyres possess a part of the rock by themselves, as do the Kittiwakes and other Gulls. The dimensions of every one of these birds are the same with these in Orkney, nor could I hear of any remarkable birds here but what are found in Orkney. Neither the Fulmar, Great Auk, nor the Solan, build here, which is something surprising. It is the number, not the variety, that amazes one, and indeed all the flights I had before seen are nothing to this; as far as the eye can stretch, the whole precipice swarms, the sea around is covered, and the air in perpetual motion, flocking either to or from the rock. This puts one in mind of a capital city to which the whole kingdom resort once in a year; here they are in perpetual motion, to and again, passing and repassing, going and returning; everything is noise and uproar, bustle and hurry reigns, every creature attentive to the great law of nature, hasting to perform its function before the return of winter, when it knows it must take its departure. All birds, except Shags and Cormorants, leave Foula in winter, as I was assured by all the inhabitants.

As the rocks in Foula are so well inhabited, the lower



grounds and moors are the same; these are covered with thousands of the Parasitiek Gull, which build among the heather, and lay two eggs of an olive colour, thinly blotched with darker shades, pretty large for the body of the bird, the shell tender and easily broken. This bird lives on the half digested food of its congeners, which they are very ready to throw up upon being disturbed, and it is no less nimble in catching. It is very artful in drawing the traveller from its nest, has many sleights for this purpose—sometimes it throws itself on the earth with all the appearance of a wounded bird, dragging its wings as if it could make no use of them, tumbling about as if its legs too were broke; at other times it pelts the too curious impertinent with great briskness, uttering a sort of determined scream, as in the former case it mews something like a cat, most piteously. This bird much varies in colour, observed three varieties; one wholly black, another dusky brown, the third with a white belly and a white ring round its neck, all of them old ones, as at this time the young birds were not hatched.

Nor are the very summits of the hills without their share of the winged race. Here we find that remarkable bird the Skua, called here Bonxie; six pair of which possess the highest ridge of Liorafield, one of the hill tops so called. Never man had better reason to observe or to remember the natural history of Bonxie than I at this time. I no sooner approached his quarters but he attacked me and my company with so great fury that every one of us were forced to do him obeysance for every stroke. He beat my water Spaniel quite out of the pit, insomuch that he fled to our feet for shelter, and could not be forced out again, tho'

a bold dog and well used to encounter Otters, or what else might be lamed by a gun. But tho' Bonxie seemed to preserve some regard for us while we kept together, upon him he had no merey, every whip he gave him made his wings eraek, and the dog erouteh into the hollows of the moor till we came up and relieved him. I followed one at some distanee from the rést, which made me part company, and reeeived several very rude salutes for my imprudenee from three, who made at me with the outmost rage; I defended myself the best way I could with my gun, fired several times at them, but as none dropt, the report did not startle them in the least, rather seemed to enrage them more. When the inhabitants are looking after their sheep in the hills, the Skua often attaeks them in such a manner that they are foreed to defend themselves with eudgels, by holding them above their heads, on which it often kills itself. Observed at some distance a great eommotion and screaming among the Parasitiek Gulls, which was oeeasioned by a eouple of Skua's that struek at them with great agility, laying about them with open bill, but seemingly more thro' wantonness than otherwise; however, where this bird approaehes it oeeasions great confusion, and other birds express their detestation in the same manner as when the Owl or other bird of prey appears elsewhere. The method of life is much the same with that of the Parasitiek Gull, only this attaeks the larger kinds of Gulls as the other does the lesser. By the most minute enquiry could not find out that it ever meddled either with its eongenens or others to destroy them; its fury seems to be more defensive than offensive; when we meet it at sea it seems to be a stupid-like bird, and sits often down within an oar's length of the boat. In Foula

this is a privileged bird, no man will nor dare shoot it, under the penalty of 16s. 8d. Ster., nor destroy its eggs; when they meet it at sea, whatever fish they have in the boat Skua always gets a share, and all this out of gratitude for beating off the Eagle, who dares not venture to prey on the island during the whole breeding season. I asked particularly whether Skua did not sometimes pay himself for defending their flocks, by taking a lamb now and then; they every one assured me they had never seen nor heard an instance of this; the Shepherd gave the very same information. Skua is not so strong as the Eagle, but much more nimble; strikes at him without mercy, with such effect that he makes the other scream aloud, and his retreat is so sudden as to avoid all danger from the Eagle. The description of the British Zoology is good. The neck is much thicker than in other Gulls, the wings reach near the point of the tail; the tail, when flying, is as round as a fan, has no long feathers like the Arctic Gull; the cry hoarse and strong. Lays two eggs in the heath of the highest hills, much of the same colour with those of the Arctic Gull. The weight 3 lb. 0 oz. 4 dr. Length, from the point of the bill to the point of the tail, 2 feet; breadth, 4 and a half. The bill  $2\frac{1}{4}$  in., black, strong and crooked; the legs black, webbs the same; the talons strong and crooked, but nothing equal to those even of the smaller birds of prey.

Crows of the Royston or hooded kind very frequent here and in other parts of Schetland; but few other common birds; few of the Grallæ, which is very odd, except Plovers, Sea Pies, and Curlicus and Snipes; no Lapwings, even in summer, in Schetland.

They have a small species of Seals pretty frequent round their coasts; and sometimes very large ones venture into the caves, but this is not very frequent: These last in Schetland are called Háf fish, *i.e.*, Seals that keep much at sea, seldom approaching land, except the most retired rocks. I only saw a glimpse of one of the latter, and that, too, swimming; the head seemed to be longer made than in the ordinary kind, the jaws much lanker and more protruded; other marks I had not time to observe, only the general bulk, which seemed at least twice as large both in length and thickness as the ordinary run that are seen about these isles; but whether specifically different or not I am to learn.

Vast quantities of Fish caught round Foula, as Ling, Cod, Tusk, Haddock, Skate, Holibut, Whittings, Seth or Coal; and the Fishing Frog is frequently driven in here; but Cod seems to be the prevailing fish in this quarter. At this time there were about 12,000 on the beach, the property of the Landlord, who has every marketable fish that is caught by every boat belonging to the Island.

The Horses in Foula are larger than the generality of the Schetland Shelties, owing I suppose to better management, for I am persuaded it is want of food and other hardships that stunts these creatures in their growth, more than any natural cause; for we see them grow much bigger upon being introduced into better pasture in summer and housed in winter, but this indeed renders them less hardy, and would not answer in Schetland, where they have no winter feeding to bestow. Mice are found here, but no rats.

Many Dye stuffs are made from the rock scurfs in

Foula, particularly a fine reddish purple, called here Coreolet (*Lichen tartareus*: Fl. Suec. 1070); a yellowish brown, with what they call Old man (*L. saxatilis*: Fl. Suec. 1075); yellow, with Heath, and several others. Coreolet is a saleable commodity from Foula. They prepare it by grinding it to powder and steeping in urine for several days, when it is made up in balls of a pound and a half, ready for use. Worsted is boiled in a sufficient quantity of this till the colour is as deep as is desired, without any other process.

They have many traditions of there having once been Wood in their Island; they show us a valley, now a moss, which they affirm was covered with it, and to this day in cutting peats often find large pieces of both trunks and branches of trees. Tradition says the Lewis-men in their plundering parties thro' the isles landed here, and after pillaging Foula burnt the wood, lest it should be a shelter to the natives in future times. In Orkney we have many like traditions, true or false is hard to determine; however, it is certain the Western Highlanders did often make summer trips to these isles, and seldom returned empty-handed. What further confirms this Foula tradition is, the old people here told me they, viz., the Lewis-men, went thence to the Ness of Schetland, where numbers of them were killed, and I have the best information from Mr Bruce of Sumburgh, that on his estate the sand often blows off and discovers heaps of bones, all thrown indiscriminately together, and to this day called the Lewis-men's graves. But to pass this till we visit Dunrossness.

The Foula people are the best Climbers in Schetland; live a good part of the summer on wild fowl from the



rocks, and fish; which occasions many scrofulous diseases so eommon thro' these isles. Their methods of getting at the wild fowl and their eggs are very dangerous. I observed in many plaees a stake struck about six inches into the bank, and this in many plaees so rotten as to fly all in pieees with a slight blow; and in all so loose as to shake with the least touch of one's foot; nay they often strike the blade of a small dagger they usually wear into the ground, and throwing a noose of a fishing eord over any of these, slip down without the least apprehension of danger. They give however a pretty good aceount of the matter; they tell us they never trust too much to the rope nor the stake, that there is little strain either on the one or the other when once they have got footing on the rock, and they depend more on their own elimbing than any rope. But with all this there are frequent instances of their perishing, and few who make this their praetiee for life die a natural death. It is a eommon byword in Foula, that sueh a one's grandfather went over the roek; his father went over the roek; and if he lives he'll go over it too.

Bland, or the serum of Butternilk separated by heat, is much used as a drink, kept till it is old and sharp, but I should think it dangerous, eausing colics, and all kinds of gripes.

Here the Pronuneiation differs a good deal from the rest of Sehetland, both in the tone and manner, and pronounceing partieular words. To a man they misplaec the aspirate, affixing it where it should not be, and leaving it out where it should, *e.g.*, one of the most sagacious of the natives was teaching his son to read the Bible, and



to know the numbers of the Psalms; he told the boy the Vorty'th and Zaxt Z'am, XLVI, was a Hex, a Hell, a Hu, and a Hi. The Norse Language is much worn out here, yet there are some who know a few words of it; it was the language of the last age, but will be entirely lost by the next. The Lord's Prayer in Foula Norse is as follows:—

“Fy vor o er i Chimeri. Halaght vara nam dit. La konungdum din cumma. La vill din vera guerde i virdin sindaeri chimeri. Gav vs dagh u dagloght bran. Forgive sindorwara sin vi forgiva gem ao sinda gainst wus. Lia wus ikè o vera tempa, but delivra wus fro adlu idlu for do i ir konungdum, u puri, u glori, Amen.”

To compare this with Wallae's specimen of Orkney Norn:—

“Favor i ır i chimeri. Helleur (rather Helleut) ir i nam thite, gilla cosdum thite cumma, vey a thine mota vara gort o yurn sinna gort i chimeri, ga vus da on da dalight brow vora, Firgive vus sinna vora sin vee firgive sindara mutha vus, lyv vus ye i tumtation, min delivra vus fro olt ilt, Amen: or On sa meteth vera.”

It is probable they are both eorrupted; however I imagine the Foula specimen comes nearer the original language, and that too seems to be mixed with English more than the distant eousinship of the different tongues will allow. None of them can write their aneient language, and but very few speak it; the best phrases are all gone, and nothing remains but a few names of things and two or three remnants of songs which one old man can repeat, and that but indistinetly. Follows a few English words translated into Norn:—

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Foula, ...	...	<i>Fugla or Uttrie.</i>
An Island,...	...	<i>Hion.</i>
Bread, ...	...	<i>Coust.</i>
Oat Bread,...	...	<i>Corka Coust.</i>
Barley Bread,	...	<i>Boga Coust.</i>
The Sea, ...	...	<i>Sheug.</i>
A Fish, ...	...	<i>Fisk.</i>
A Haddock,	...	<i>Hoissan.</i>
A Cod, ...	...	<i>Gronge, Grodningar.</i>
A Ling, ...	...	<i>Longo.</i>
A Herring,	...	<i>Sildlin.</i>
A Rock, ...	...	<i>Berg, Berrie.</i>
A Boat, ...	...	<i>Bodin, Knorin.</i>
A Sail, ...	...	<i>Seiglè.</i>
A Mast, ...	...	<i>Mostin.</i>
A Coat, ...	...	<i>Quot.</i>
A Shoe, ...	...	<i>Seugin.</i>
A Stocking,	...	<i>Sokin.</i>
A Cap, ...	...	<i>Ugan.</i>
Sea Mall or Mew,...		<i>Whit fuglin.</i>
The Eagle,...	...	<i>Ednin.</i>
A Trencher or Plate,		<i>Bergesken.</i>
A Spoon, ...	...	<i>Sponin.</i>
A Ladle, ...	...	<i>Heosa.</i>
A Horse, ...	...	<i>Hessin.</i>
A Mare, ...	...	<i>Rupa.</i>
A Cow, ...	...	<i>Kurin.</i>
A Sheep, ...	...	<i>Fie, Sedvite.</i>
A Ewe, ...	...	<i>Oron.</i>
A Pott, ...	...	<i>Posney.</i>

These few words are what I could pick up ; many others I proposed, but without effect. Norn Proverbs I could find none, nor is it possible to get translations, as it is entirely confined to the lower class of people, who cannot be supposed to have a thorough knowledge either of one Language or the other.

The following song is the most entire I could find, but the disorder of some of the stanzas will show that it is not wholly so. The subject is a strife between a King of Norway and an Earl of Orkney, on account of the hasty marriage of the Earl with the King's daughter in her father's absence. Here it is worthy to be observed that most of the fragments they have are old historical Ballads and Romances, this kind of poetry being more greedily swallowed and retentively preserved by memory than any others, and most fitted to the genius of the Northerns. In this Ballad I cannot answer for the orthography. I wrote it as an old man pronounced it ; nor could he assist me in this particular. This man (William Henry, a farmer in Guttorm, in Foula) has the most knowledge of any I found ; he spoke of three kinds of poetry used in Norn, and repeated or sung by the old men ; the Ballad (or Romance, I suppose) ; the Vysie or Vyse, now commonly sung to dancers ; and the simple Song. By the account he gave of the matter, the first seems to have been valued here chiefly for its subject, and was commonly repeated in winter by the fireside ; the second seems to have been used in publick meetings, now only sung to the dance ; and the third at both. Let it be remarked that the following ballad may be either written in two long line or four short line stanzas.

THE EARL OF ORKNEY AND THE KING OF NORWAY'S  
DAUGHTER : A BALLAD.

1.

Da vara Jarlin d'Orkneyar  
For frinda sîn spur de ro  
Whirdi an skildè meun  
Our glas buryon burtaga.

2.

Or vanna ro eidnar fuo  
Tega du meun our glas buryon  
Kere friendè min yamna men  
Eso vrildan stiendi gede min vara to din.

3.

Yom keimir culligin  
Fro liene burt  
Asta Vaar hon fruen Hildina  
Hemi stu mer stien.

4.

Whar an yaar elonden  
Ita kan sadnast wo  
An scal vara kundè  
Wo osta tre sin reithiu ridna dar fro

5.

Kemi to Orkneyar Jarlin  
Vilda mien sante Maunis  
I Orknian u bian sian  
I lian far diar.

6.

An gevè Drotnign kedn puster  
On de kin firsane furu  
Tworare wo eder  
Whitranè kidn.

7.

In kimeriu Jarlin  
U klapasse Hildina  
On de kidn quirto  
Vult doch, fiegan vara mochi or fly din.\*

---

\* Stanzas marked thus \* seem to be confused, some having too much, others too little to render the verse complete.

8.

Elde vilda fiegan vara  
 Fy min u alt sin  
 Ans namnu wo  
 So minyach u ere min heve Orkneyar kingè ro.\*

9.

Nu di skall taga dor yochwo  
 And u ria dor to strandane nir  
 U yilsa fy minu avon  
 Blit an ear ne cumi i dora band.

10.

Nu Swaran Konign  
 So mege gak honon i muthi  
 Whath ear di ho gane mier  
 I daute buthe.

11.

Tretti merkè vath ru godle  
 Da skall yach ger yo  
 U all de vara sonna less  
 So linge sin yach liva mo.

12.

Nu linge stug an konign  
 U linge wo an swo  
 Wordig vaar dogh mugè sonè  
 Yacha skier fare moga so minde yach angan u frien  
 rost wath comman mier to landa.†

13.

Nu swara Hiluge  
 Hera geve honon scam  
 Taga di gild firre Hildina  
 Sin yach skall liga dor fram.

14.

Estin whaar u feur fetign  
 Agonga kadn i sluge  
 Feur fetign sin gonga  
 Kadn i pluge.

---

\* Stanzas marked thus \* seem to be confused, some having too much, others too little to render the verse complete.

† This verse seems to be part of an intermediate stanza, perhaps to be placed between those marked 12 and 13.

15.

Nu stienderin Jarlin  
U linge wo an wo  
Dese mo eke Orknear  
So linge san yach lava mo.

16.

Nu eke tegaran san  
Sot Koningn fyrin din  
U alt yach an Hilhugin  
Widn ugare din arar.

17.

Nu swarar an frauna Hildina  
U dem san idne i fro  
Di slo dor a bardagana  
Dar comme ov sin mo.

18.

Nu Jarlin an genger  
I vadlin fram  
U kadnar sina mien  
Geven skeger i Orkneyan.

19.

Han u cummin  
In u vod lerdin  
Fronde fans lever  
Vel burne mun.

20.

Nu fruna Hildina  
On genger i vadlin fram  
Fy di yera da ov man dum  
Dora di spidlaiki mire man.

21.

Nu sware an Hiluge  
Crego gevan a scam  
Gayer an Jarlin frinde  
Din an u fadlin in.



## 22.

Nu fac an Jarlin dahuge  
 Dar min de an engin gro  
 An east ans huge ei  
 Fong ednar u vaxhedne more neo.

## 23.

Di lava mir gugna  
 Yift bal yagh fur o lande  
 Gipt mir nu fruan Hildina  
 Vath godle u fasta bande.

## 24.

Nu bill on heve da yals  
 Guadnè borè u da kadn  
 Sina kloyn a bera do skall  
 Fon fruna Hildina verka wo sino chelsina villya.\*

## 25.

Hildina liger wo chaldona  
 U o dukrar u grothè  
 Min du buga till bridlevsin  
 Bonlother u duka dogha.

## 26.

Nu Hildina on askar feyrin  
 Sien di gava mier livè  
 Ou skinka vin  
 Ou guida vin.\*

## 27.

Duska skinka vin, u guida vin  
 Tinka dogh eke wo  
 Jarlin an gougha herc din.\*

## 28.

Watha skilde tinka  
 Wo Jarlin gougà herè min  
 Hien minde yagh inga forlskona  
 Bera fare kera fyriu min.

---

\* Stanzas marked thus \* seem to be confused, some having too much others too little to render the verse complete.

29.

Da gerde on fruna Hildina  
On bar se mien ot  
On soverin fest,  
Fysin u quarsin sat.

30.

Da gerde un fruna Hildina  
On bard im ur  
Hadlin burt sien on laghdè  
Gloug i otsta jatha port.

31.

Nu iki visti an Hiluge  
Ike ov till do  
Eldin var commin i lut  
U stor u silkè sark ans smo.

32.

Nu leveren fram  
Hiluge du kereda  
Fraun Hildina du  
Gevemir live u gre.

33.

So mege u gouga gre  
Skall dogh swo  
Skall lathì min heran  
I bardagana fwo.

34.

Du tuechtada lide undocht yach  
Swo et sa ans bugin bleo  
Dogh casta ans huge  
I mit fung u vexemir mise meo.

35.

Nu tachtè on heve fwelsko  
Ans bo vad mild u stien  
Dogh skall aldè misè Koningnsens  
Vadne vilda mien.

A literal translation of the above I could not procure, but the substance is this :—“ An Earl of Orkney, in some of his rambles on the coast of Norway, saw and fell in love with the King’s daughter of the country. As their passion happened to be reciprocal, he carried her off in her father’s absence, who was engaged in war with some of his distant neighbours. On his return, he followed the fugitives to Orkney, accompanied by his army, to revenge on the Earl the rape of his daughter. On his arrival there, Hildina (which was her name), first spied him, and advised her now husband to go and attempt to pacify the King. He did so, and by his appearance and promises brought the King so over as to be satisfied with the match. This, however, was of no long standing, for as soon as the Earl’s back was turned a courtier, called Hiluge, took great pains to change the King’s mind, for it seems Hiluge had formerly hoped to succeed with the daughter himself. His project took, and the matter came to blows; the Earl is killed by Hiluge, who cut off his head and threw it at his lady, which, she says, vexed her even more than his death, that he should add cruelty to revenge. Upon the Earl’s death, Hildina is forced to follow her father to Norway, and in a little time Hiluge makes his demand to have her in marriage of her father; he consents, and takes every method to persuade Hildina, who, with great reluctance, agrees upon condition that she is allowed to fill the wine at her wedding. This is easily permitted, and Hildina infuses a drug which soon throws the company into a dead sleep, and after ordering her father to be removed, set the house on fire. The flame soon rouses Hiluge, who piteously cries for mercy, but the taunts he had bestowed at the death of the Earl of Orkney

are now bitterly returned, and he is left to perish in the flames."

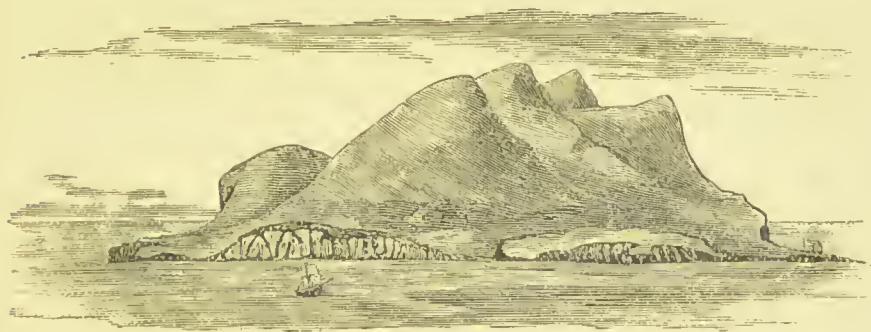
Such is the subject of the Ballad, which might have been built on a true story, tho' now lost. It, however, shews the genius of the people, that tho' they were cut off from the rest of the world they had amusements, and these correspondent to the manners of the Northerns, among whom nothing was more common than the recital of the acts of their fathers. Most or all of their tales are relative to the history of Norway; they seem to know little of the rest of Europe but by names; Norwegian transactions they have at their fingers' ends.

In the middle of the eastermost enclosure stands a little neat Church, where divine service is performed once or twice a year, either by the parson of Waes, to whose charge they belong, or by an itinerant, sent by the Society for Propogating Christian Knowledge. Thro' the rest of the year the parish clerk reads the Scriptures.

In the Church-yard observed a large round stone which I could just easily lift, formerly of great use to the inhabitants. This was the Putting Stone of the island, and here the whole community met on Sunday afternoon, the younger sort to try their strength at putting, the elders as spectators and reciters of ancient matches at putting, nay sometimes mixed in the diversion. They have a fixed stone, which is the standing goal, and I observed several marks, by driving stones into the earth, which they told me was the distance where such and such an old man, now gone, threw the Putting Stone, at the same time lamenting that now none in the isle could come up with them.

The greatest part of the rocks round the island are Fre-

stone. No Alpine plants on the hill, which surprized me. The hill shoots up into many peaks, each of which have their names in Norn. The southermost is the Noup, the next Liorafield, from *Liora*, signifying a (lum) chimney or vent; here is said to be the famous vent or hole mentioned by Brand, now stopped up with great care, nor could I get a sight of it, from a superstitious notion among the people, that he who opens the Hole of Liorafield the first time he is in the island dies immediately after, and this was the only thing I could find them shy in. The third, or highest top, is Sneugo, the habitation of Skua; the fourth, Commafield; the last, the Keam, or habitation of the sea birds.



FOULA, BEARING W. B. S. DIST. 2 MILES.

In ascending the hills the weather varied very much, especially as to heat and cold. The bottoms, stifling hot, would scarce allow us to wear our clothes, but as we approached the top it became so cold as scarce to be borne, and this attended with a driving, piercing mist, that soon wet us to the skin. N.B.—The whole time I was in Foula never saw the land of Schetland but once; am informed this is no novelty in the summer time, foggs prevail

continually. When tolerably clear, no night for near three months.

*Saturday, July 9th.*—Took leave of these hospitable people, and set out on our return for Vailasound; we had not, however, proceeded above 10 miles when the wind shifted all of a sudden, and forced us to return. As it continued tolerable weather, and we had time enough, as we imagined, to carry us in; how soon we got upon the fishing grounds, we threw out a couple of lines, and in something more than an hour caught 19 fine Cod, not of the largest size indeed, but fine thick fish, and grown to the very tail. The colour, when just caught, a fine willow green, shaded with a pale yellow, but this they lost almost instantaneously.

In approaching we lost our fishing ground, and I observed they bit best on 30 fathom sand; when the water grew deeper, or the bottom changed, not a fish. Coming up with the land, we found we had spent our tide, and the flood set down very strong against us; and for our comfort it became so misty that we could scarcely see the island. In a moment we hurried past it into the south roust, which made us pay heartily for our Cod: the waves on all sides dancing mast high, threatened instant destruction; dashing straight down into the boat, almost filled her in a twinkling; as fast as we could throw out we could scarcely keep her clear: however the Foula men, who had observed us before the fog, and suspecting what had happened, sent out a couple of boats, better acquainted than we, who after a most hearty wetting bout towed us safe into the harbour. To compensate our labour, we had a most excellent supper of Codfish (rendered I suppose more delicate by their being so dear bought) and a dish peculiar



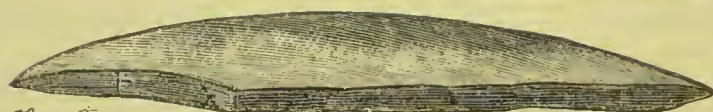
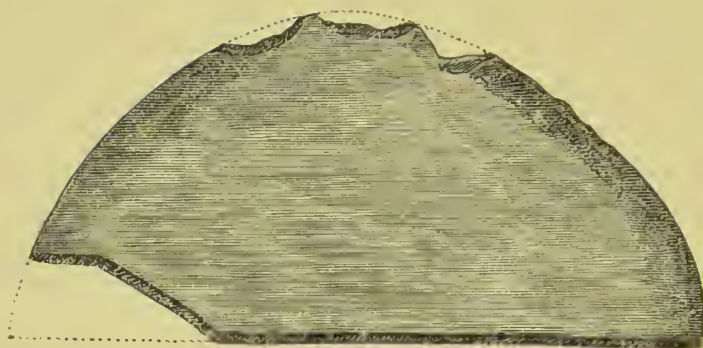
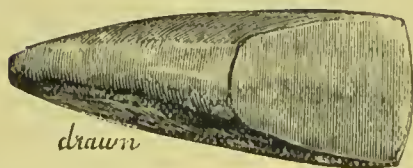
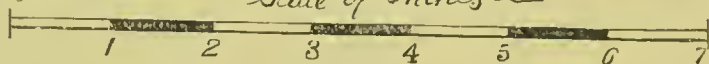
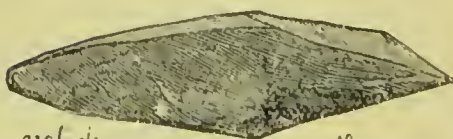
to Schetland and fishing countries, called Livered Mogies; that is, the stomach of the fish washed clean and filled with the liver, so boiled in saltwater. It is eaten with pepper and salt, and tastes very well if the liver is good and not old; but so much oil requires a dram to qualify it, which the Schetland people in general are not sparing of.

*Sunday, July 10th.*—At the desire of the whole island, preached twice to a most attentive audience of the whole community. These honest creatures, out of the simplicity of their hearts, are not shy to express their approbation of a publick discourse even in words, and that aloud. In the evening the greatest part of them attended at the booth to prayers, to which they hearkened in a very becoming and decent manner, concluding the day by thanking me in a way more sincere than polite, but which reaches the heart sooner than the most laboured speeches they could have framed.

The common appellation in Foula to all acquaintances is "Brother."

*Monday, July 11th.*—Took leave of Foula for all, the wind shaping about, at 3 o'clock in the morning. By nine we arrived in Vaila-Sound, whence we set out.

Here I was shewn a couple of stone instruments yet differently shaped from those taken notice of before. The largest 7 inches long and 4 broad, ground thin, shaped like the segment of a circle, the circular side edged but pretty much broke, the chord thick like the back of a knife, and left so purposely; seems to have been used as a knife. The other four inches long, shaped pretty much like the axe (*vide* p. 83 *supra*); might have been the head of a spear or other long weapon.

*Fig. 1<sup>st</sup>**Scale of Inches**drawn**not drawn**Fig. 2<sup>nd</sup>*

## SANDNESS.

*Tuesday, July 12th.*—Continued my journey towards Sandness. Crossed thro' seven miles of hills without a single house, and scarce a path to direct the unacquainted traveller. The hills around bleak, bare and rocky, the bottoms covered with moss and good pasture. Many lakes thro' the hills of this day's walk, most of them full of Common Trout; several have small holms, clothed with shrubs of willow. In one of the largest, called Burgo Water, the remains of a large Burgh or Pight's castle, about 7 feet of the walls still standing, but now inaccessible by reason of the depth of water round it. At some distance is Longa Water, where I found the *Nymphaea alba*, or Great White Water Lilly, Fl. Suec. 470, in great plenty, the only time I had seen it in Orkney or Schetland, nor do I think it is to be found any where else thro' them. The flowers very large, equalling a small Tulip; the petals numerous, approaching to a full flower; the only instance that I know of this in our Island Catalogue. In the greater Mousa Water, another loch of this route, a couple of Sea Eagles had fixed their residence for ages, on a small rock or holm, but the country people, wearied with their devastations, had fallen upon a method of dislodging them, by swimming to the holm on floats and destroying their young ones.

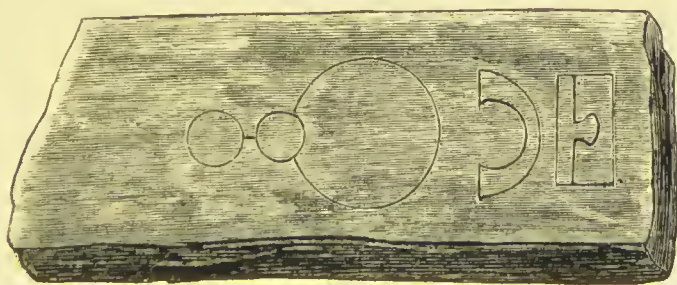
Of shore Burghs, between Waes and Sandness, Futaburgh, the Wart or Vord of Sandness Hill, another small one on a hill top to the eastward, the Burgh of Hogseter, in Sandness, all in ruins.

Entered Sandness, a beautiful flat of Corn, Grass, and

Meadow ground, facing the west; inhabited by about 70 families; most excellently situate for fishings. Just as I arrived the boats came in, some with 60, others with 70, Ling, besides Tusk and Cod. Some had a few of the picked Dog Fish, which sometimes vexes them on this side. All the marketable fish are to be delivered at the Landlord's Booth, where the capture of each boat is numbered, and accounted for at the end of the fishing season. The Ling are sold for 4*d.* a piece, Tusk and Cod at a 1*d.* or 2*d.*, which low price occasions vast grumblings among the fishermen, who complain that they are forced with their children to sea in all weathers, exposed to every danger; forced to purchase their boats and every material at the highest price, and after all their expense and toil have no reward for their labour. The dearth of materials, and the precariousness of the climate, always keep the fishermen in debt; and, if not remedied, must end in the ruin of the fishing altogether. This remedy is not far to seek; it is to give a little more for the fish, and every proprietor to pursue his own fishing; for when an island fishing beach is set to taksmen, it has always a bad effect; a feeling landlord may sympathize with his tenants, because he does or ought to consider that they are his chief support, but a taksman seldom goes so far, seldom has any mercy on the poor fishermen, but squeezes them to the utmost. Immediately as the boats come on shore, and the fish are numbered, the splitters, washers, and salters, set to work upon them; the first, with a stroke or two of a large knife, cuts them open from the neck to the tail, pulls out half the bone, and throws the fish to the washer, who immediately washes them in the sea, and after they have drained, a pretty thick layer of salt is

thrown on the bottom of a large chest (calked and pitched for the purpose), a layer of fish is laid in order so as to contain well, then a layer of salt, and so stratum super stratum till the chest is full. They commonly salt twice a week, Monday and Wednesday, but this depends much on the quantity got. They are all dried on a beach; and, where they have not this conveniency naturally, they force it by covering the green with stones. In clear weather, a little time dries fish, but gloomy, misty, or wet weather (and such is too common in Schetland), renders them brown, and spoils them. A well cured fish is of a fine greenish colour, and when held between the eye and the light looks transparent.

Observed in the wall of the Church a stone, carved with several odd figures, the meaning of which nobody here could give any account of; only they have a sort of superstitious value for it, nor does tradition say for what. The engraving is shallow, nor is any literal inscription.



*Inches*





## PAPA STOUR.

*Wednesday, July 13th.*—Crossed for Papa Stour over a very rapid tide, the flood setting due west out of St. Magnus' Bay; it makes here a terrible rippling, often dangerous for boats, of which several have been overset in this sound, even in tolerable weather. To come at the proper landing place, it is usual for boats to go round the east side of the island; and, to cut this shorter, they go thro' a vast cavern, cut thro' a small holm, into which a boat can go with all her oars out. This is the common passage, but it is rather horrible. When one enters this dismal abyss he sees nothing but a huge grotto, continued a good way under the solid rock, without any outlet, and on each side entrances into other apartments impassable for a boat. By and by all is lighted on a sudden, by a large window in the roof, but even this serves only to make the gloom more dreadful. After rowing sometime longer, the boat turns a corner, and you then begin to see the outlet. The gloomy horrors of this place are much heightened by the beating of the waves on all sides, the rattling of these in the inner apartments, the murmuring echo which seems to express herself in groans; add to these the croaking of the Cormorants, and the cooing of Rock Pigeons, all of them in such a place as this transformed into sounds of woe. Such effect has it on the spirits that one is glad to be delivered from it and regain the cheerful open air, and more cheerful ideas than can be inspired by this most doleful hole. Hard by the opening of this cavern is Frau-a Stack, or the Lady's Rock, a steep insulated rock, pretty high, the



area of the top but small. Here is still to be seen the remains of a small building, in which tradition says a gentleman confined his daughter from her lover, which, however, it seems had not the designed effect, but the lady gave pregnant proofs that even

“Over rocks that are steepest  
Love will find out the way.”

—*Vide* “Percy’s Poems,” Vol. III. 213.

Landed in House-voe, a small open bay, surrounded on all sides with fine Corn-fields, this being the most beautiful of the lesser Schetland Isles. The cultivated part, indeed, is a charming spot, abounding in Corn and Grass, the soil in general sandy. The uncultivated part thin and bare, scarce even affording pasture for sheep, and but little firing. Here are a breed of large Cows, but degenerate from their original size for want of proper winter feeding. In general the Schetland cattle are larger than those of Orkney, owing, I suppose, to Dutch and Danish cattle being brought here to improve their breed, which we cannot have in Orkney.

On a small level green, near the middle of the cultivated part, observed the marks of a circular enclosure, in which tradition says a Lord Terwil fought a duel with another gentleman, on some dispute or other, and afterwards accompanied by his eleven sons, went down on purpose to rob his neighbours, but together with his whole family perished on a rock, since called Terwil’s Ba’ or rock.

Papa Stour is much cut into bays and harbours, which renders it a very convenient fishing station, accordingly it was formerly much frequented on that account, and just now the people of Waes send several boats here to continue

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the fishing season, but their success seems not to be so great as on the other side of the bay in Northmaven.

On the west coast of Papa lie Tugla Skerry and Lyra Skerry, two rocks covered with grass—the one inhabited by vast numbers of Gulls, the other by Lyres (*Procellaria Puffenus*), called here Lierè. Lyres don't seem to be so much esteemed in Schetland as in Orkney. I never saw them at a table, nor are they at so much pains in catching them as with us. At a few leagues distance from Papa, lie the Ve Skerries, frequented by a few Seals, some of which are killed by people from this island.

Brand mentions a stone in the churchyard which, he says, is concave from end to end, but none such is to be seen. I observed an elliptical stone, with a groove along the edge of it, as if for receiving a rope, probably has been used as a ship's anchor; but why brought there is a mystery, possibly it might have been a votive present.

Shot a young Immer Goose here, which weighed  $9\frac{1}{2}$  lb.; both parents accompanied it thro' the bay, and haunted the place with screaming cries for several hours after. I had it dressed, and it eat very well, only a little fishy.

Of old a sort of leprosy much afflicted the inhabitants of this island, occasioned by eating much fish, and that ill-dressed for want of firing; but this is now pretty much worn out, and few instances of it have been observed these several years.

Papa lies in the mouth of a vast bay, called that of St. Magnus, about twelve miles over, often swarming with Herrings. Some days before my arrival here, they had caught a good number in the bay, but now not one was to be found, which shews the quickness of their migrations

when once they are put in motion. Herrings continue on the Schetland coast thro' the whole year, fall into St. Magnus' Bay in harvest, and continue less or more thro' the winter, but this is nothing to the swarms which are round the coasts and never come into the bays; these are the armies that enrich our neighbours while we look tamely on. After August the seas here become too boisterous to continue the fishing, but while it lasts, whole fleets are loaded, and many more might, for in the months of June and July the seas for many leagues are perfectly alive, and continue so while this vast caravan performs its march to the southward thro' the Orkneys, to the east and west sides of Scotland. When herrings first come into these seas they are thin and poor, but a short time fattens them, and by midsummer they are in their prime, continue so till they spawn, when the fishermen give over catching, leaving them to the summer to recruit their strength and their numbers.

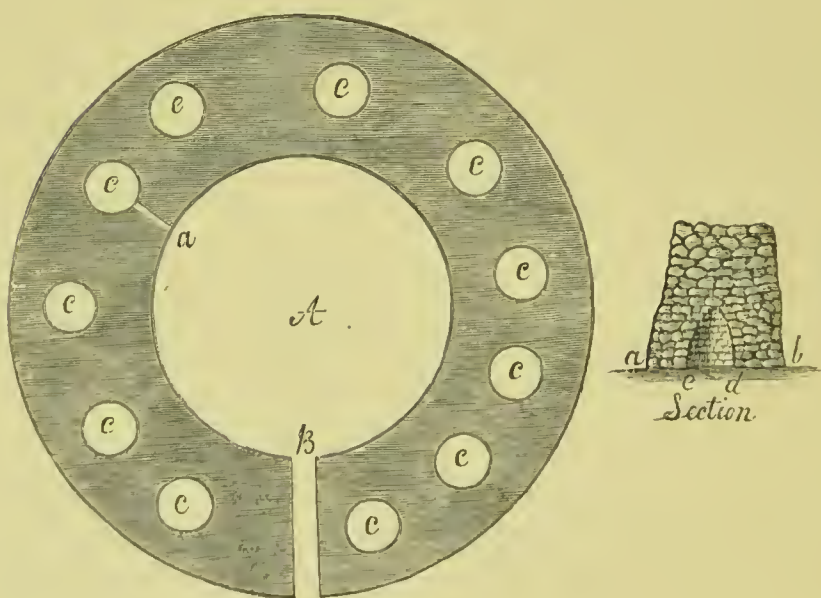
### SANDNESS, &c.

*Friday, July 15th.*—Crossed Papa Sound once more, and struck off to the eastward towards Busta. In Sandness passed a small loch with a holm, frequented by thousands of the common Gulls, which build, and afford vast numbers of eggs and young birds to the neighbouring inhabitants. In the Noup of Norbie, a few birds, none remarkable. Every step of the coast on this side grows more rocky, scarce covered with an inch of earth. In some spots, with vast industry, they have scraped together a little mould, laid it between the stones, and sown it with common grain,

but, I should think, it would be apt to burn out if there was any sunshine in Schetland.

On a small holm of Helinster-voe, observed the remains of a large and curious Burgh, called the Burgh of Burra-firth. Here the wall is single, at least as much as is now to be seen of it, with small apartments to be entered from within. The double wall with galleries, began above these, and was continued to the top. The dimensions, plan, and section of one of these apartments are as follows:—

Inside Diameter . . . . .	Feet 30
Thickness of the Wall . . . . .	13
Diameter of one of the Apartments in the wall . . .	5



PLAN.—*A*. The area ; *B*. The entrance ; *c. c.* The apartments in the wall ; *a*. The entrance to one of these, but for the most part these are stopt up.

SECTION.—*a. b.* The thickness of the wall at the foundation ; *c. d.* Section of one of the apartments.

It is observable that the builders of these Burghs seem to have known nothing of the construction of vaults, nor the use of cement. In forming these wall apartments, the stones are made to jut over one another, till by little and little they draw to a point covered with a single stone. All the passages, galleries, and other hollows are topped with broad flat stones, well supported at both ends by the double walls. This Burgh of Burrafirth has no rampart, nor has it need of any, for the sea washes its walls on all sides. The use of the small apartments in the wall seem to have been for concealing anything precious, but in those I broke up, found nothing to support this conjecture, or to lay the foundation for any other.

In my way eastward, entered Aithsting Parish once more, saw several lochs well furnished with Trout, with small holms in which several pairs of the Raingoose\* are bred. They are most constant companions thro' the year, but particularly in the breeding season, when they never part. The male has a spot of red on the throat, the female black.

Crossed Onziefirth at Nounsburgh, where are the ruins of a large Burgh or Pight's Castle, but here, as well as in most places else, the stones have been carried off for house building.

### VEMANTRIE.

Took boat for Vemantrie, a rock of about two miles long, and as many broad, inhabited by one family, only proper for feeding sheep, of which they keep a great

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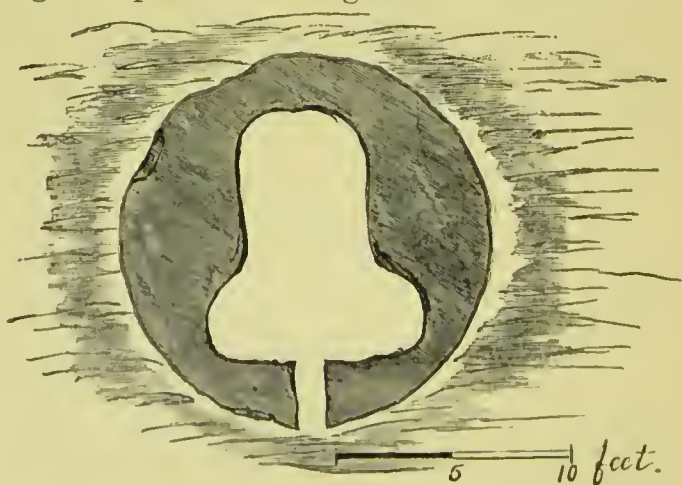
\* Red Throated Diver. Br. Zool. Vol. II.



number, like all others in Schetland, so much spotted and mottled that they look liker goats than sheep.

Great numbers of Otters about Vemantrie, also the ordinary kind of Seals very frequent in the sea caverns. Eagles from the neighbouring isle frequent this much, and make great havock among the lambs. The tenant told me he had killed seven in a short time, shewed me the remains of one, which was the Sea Eagle. (Br. Zool. I.)

On the top of the highest hill a Pight's house of the least dimensions of any I had yet observed. It differed much from the others before described, would scarce contain six or eight people in a sitting posture. Seems to have been designed entirely for a watch tower, for which purpose it is excellently situate, as from it one can see most of the Burghs of this side of the country, particularly Nounsburch; the Wart of Burrowland, in Waes; the Wart of Houland, in Aithsting; the Coppins of Heiglebister, in Weesdale; and the Wart of Rona's Hill, in Northmaven, which are the most conspieuous in the whole country. The figure is different from the others, and follows. It is covered a top with large flat picees of hard granite.



*Wart of Rona's Hill*



Was shewn here a couple of the stone weapons mentioned p. 83, one of them 12 the other 11 inches long, well ground to an edge, found in turning up a piece of ground not cultivate in the memory of man.

Saw here an old man of about 95, his hair and beard as white as snow ; however, he seemed to bear his years well. Extreme old age seems not very frequent in Schetland.

### MUCKLE ROE.

Detained the boat which carried me to Muckle Roe, an island about four miles long and as many broad ; inhabited by 13 families, who are placed on the E. and N.E. sides. The west side very bare rocks, oddly cut into numerous loops and caverns, which give it a most barbarous appearance ; but afford shelter for great numbers of Seals and Otters, the skins of the latter being a valuable mercantile commodity. The Sea Eagle, here very frequent in the rocks, is proscribed thro' all Schetland ; a reward of five shillings sterling given for the head of an Eagle, 3*d.* for a Raven, and 2*d.* for a Crow, which has a good deal thinned the country of these birds, but not rooted them out altogether.

On the S. East side of Roe lies Papa Little, remarkable for nothing but good Cattle pasture ; and such is the character of the next Isle of Linga, quite uninhabited, but affords good Peat for fuel.

Left these small isles, and proceeded across the Voe to Busta, a large house ; seems to have been built at different periods, just as the proprietors had use for it. The gardens are good, and well laid out, planted with different sorts of

wood, but all stunted as soon as it comes above the garden wall. I observed Common Elder,\* Rowan† and Plane‡ Trees, grow highest, but even these could not stand the climate. The present proprietor has made some trials with several other kinds of wood, but none prospered. Opposite to the House of Busta, at the north walk, is a most excellent Echo, where a short sentence, distinctly and clearly pronounced, is repeated word for word a few seconds after.

The whole grounds round Busta are bare, rocky, and bleak, an entire hindrance to improvement, even where people are industrious.

### SOUTH DELTING.

*Saturday, July 16th.*—Went thro' South Delting, consisting for the greatest part of hills, here and there intersected by a deep Voe, on which the inhabitants have fixed their habitations for the conveniency of fishing.

Little worth observing in S. Delting; the hills have excellent pasturage for Shelties and Cattle; breed vast numbers of Curlews and Snipes; and the rocky elifs, many pairs of the Little Merlin.

Vast quantities of Potatoes planted here; these were introduced some years ago, are found to answer extremely well with the soil, and with the constitutions of the people, who live several months of the year on potatoes and fish without the least inconveniency; perhaps they may have a

\* *Sambucus nigra*. Fl. Suec. 265.

† *Sorbus aucuparia*. Ib. 435.

‡ *Aur Pseudo-platanus*. Sp. Pl. 1495.

good tendency to remove their serofulous disorders. They have not much Corn, but their Potatoes help it out much, and hinder them from buying so much as usual; and, indeed, since these became so general in Schetland, meal is less required among the lower class, who live much on animal food, more so than any commons in Great Britain.

Burghs still continued round the shores, always in sight of one another, but for the most part so much in ruins that it is sometimes impossible to trace the least remains of the fabrick.

### THE ISLANDS OF YELLSOUND.

*Monday, July 18th.*—Busta was so obliging as accompany me in his barge thro' the small Islands of Yellsound. The first of these is Lamma, inhabited by a single family, but remarkable for nothing else; Little Rooe has another; Stourholm is uninhabited, except by the white or spotted bellied Cormorant ealled Lorie. (*Vide* p. 85 *sup.*) Brother Isle has one family; Samfre, four; Fish-holm has been inhabited, now waste; Linga, uninhabited except by the Great Terns, which possess it in thousands; Biga, inhabited; Unaru, not; Foram, or Foreholm, an uninhabited peninsula kept for pasture. Ended our day's tour at Watherholm, a small isle scarce a mile round, but abounding in excellent Pasture for Cattle. The grass was so luxuriant that it struck us knee height, and that all over the isle.

None of the isles of this day's trip possess anything remarkable; the uninhabited ones afford Pasture, and in this respect are more or less valuable to the proprietors; the inhabited ones a little Corn, with fuel for firing, which is no scarce article here. They are all situate in the midst

of a very rapid Firth, which abounds in all the lesser kinds of fish, particularly Coalfish, which are killed both for meat and oil. The fry of the last draws many of the Whale kind into Yellsound. I observed Porpoises in vast numbers, with now and then a Chaffer (*Vide* p. 86), which seems peculiarly fond of the Coalfish.

Returned from the isles of Yellsound, and

### NORTHMAVEN.

*Tuesday, July 19th.*—Set out for Northmaven, which I entered by Mavisgrind, a neck of land about 80 yards over, which joins this Parish to the rest of the Mainland. After a very hard walk of eight miles thro' moors, hills and rocks, where the road in many places was scarce half a foot broad, the country quite uncultivated except here and there a small spot, which looks among the rest like fairy ground, arrived at Hilswick, the Minister's seat and the seat of the best booth in the Parish.

Here the scene alters for the better; the fields around well cultivated, producing excellent grain, and not a little in quantity. The sea around full of fish, many thousands of which were at this time on a most extensive natural beach, in all the stages of curing.

Northmaven is one of the best places for fishing in Schetland; they here have the largest boats, and venture farthest to sea of all others, and accordingly bring ashore the greatest quantity of fish, insomuch that there have been instances of a Northmaven boat's bringing ashore twenty two scores of Ling! at one haul; but when this is the case they are obliged to throw garbage, heads, and

smaller fish overboard. The boats used in Northmaven are full eighteen feet keel, and six beam, furnished with six paddles and a sail, all which amounts to £6 Ster. The ordinary complement of lines is 120 bughts, each 55 fathoms long, with hooks at the distance of 4 fathoms, or 14 hooks on each bught. The whole length is 6600 fathoms ( $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles), mounted with about 1600 hooks. Each bught or ground line costs 1s. 8d., the whole £10 Ster., which, together with a Haddock line and some other conveniencies, makes a boat fitted and ready for sea cost about £18 Ster. This large expense and the precariousness of the weather, which often bereaves them of their lines twice or thrice in a season, keeps the fishermen always poor, and for the most part so indebted to their masters, as the profits of the whole season cannot answer, even here where the fishing is carried on in its greatest extent, and the best encouragement given for the capture.

Near Hilswiek was shewn in the roek a large vein of a fattish kind of stone, called here Claber, used in many cases as a medicine, espeeially in excoriations of echildren, the small pox, &c. At some distance this is found in vast quantities, the whole sea banks consisting either of this or a green flinty-like matter, composed of long fibres, and almost transparent. The fat stone is white, mixed with purple spots of various tints, and in some pieees almost white. Where it is exposed to the air it is pretty hard, yet may be easily cut with a knife; after digging a little deeper it becomes softer, yet the softest parts never stain the fingers, but feel clammy, as if rubbed with oil or grease. What other properties this fossil may have time must try, but one it seems to possess equally with fuller's earth, to

which it is near akin, that is taking greasy spots from woollen clothes, which it does equally well with the former. The green rock may be raised in pretty large pieces, seems to approach the nature of Amianthus; the Claber in pieces of any size.\*

*Wednesday, July 20th.*—Went towards Eshaness, the most westerly part of Northmaven. The country but very thinly inhabited for the greatest part of the way; however the farmhouses neatly built, mostly of stone and lime, with thatched roofs. Near the isle of Stenness the country grows better, and the farms closer together, with a tolerable quantity of growing Corns. At Stenness about 85 boats ply the fishing, and here saw vast quantities of half cured fish, to be sent to Hilswick, the Proprietor's storehouse, there to be wholly dried, and wait the arrival of contracted ships to carry them to market.

The sea rocks between Hilswick and Stenness are pretty high, and remarkably hollowed into caverns. At some distance from the land vast stacks, which appear like steeples in the water. Some of these have the exact resemblance of old Gothick cathedrals; these called the Drong look like a small fleet of wherries with barked sails; others have the appearance of vessels ashore; in a word there is great variety, nor does it need great stretch of imagination to make out the resemblance.

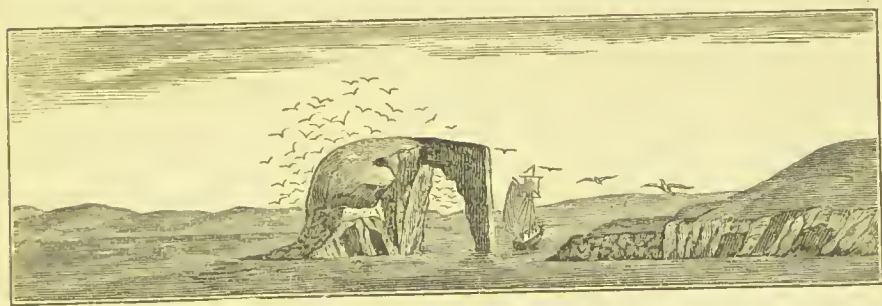
Opposite to Stenness is Doreholm, strangely hollowed out into vast arches, one of which is very remarkable. The west side of the holm seems as if split and carried

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\* This is surely the Steatites or Soap-stone of Authors.



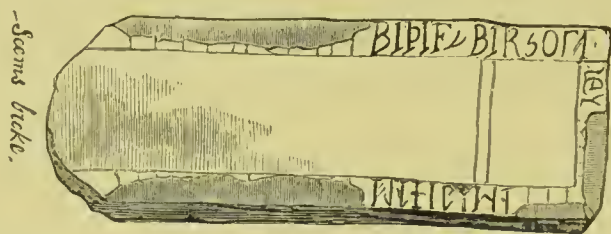
off from the rest, only a large fragment remaining. This consists of a thin piece of rock, the only reliick after the fall of half the island; it still leans to the isle, and forms an arch of about 70 feet high, and so wide that a small vessel with all sails set might sail under it. Another lesser runs thro' underneath the island, in height about the third of the former. Both have a grand appearance, and strike the mind with awe, especially when one enters the gloomy recesses of the latter. On the top vast numbers of the Black and White Gull, and in the shelves a few Kittiwakes and Tommy Noddies.



The Isle of Stenness, called sometimes Saila, and by Preston, Sarla, is uninhabited; the western side high, and quite covered with Kittiwakes; this being the isle which Brand says produces so many eggs, and in which the birds fly so thick that they cloud the very air; however, there is no variety. They seem fond of the young Kittiwakes in Schetland, but not as a whet they assist to form a meal, but in my opinion require a pretty sharp appetite for a sauce.

At a mile's distance, in a well cultivated hollow, observed the ruins of Cross-kirk, an old Popish Chapel, much frequented by the superstitious of old, now in ruins. In

the churchyard observed a gravestone about 5 feet long, with shallow engraving on it, much defaced, both by the wearing and splintering of the stone. An inscription runs round the edge of it in (to me) an unknown language, seems from the few characters that were entire a mixed Runick. Follows the stone with the inscription:—



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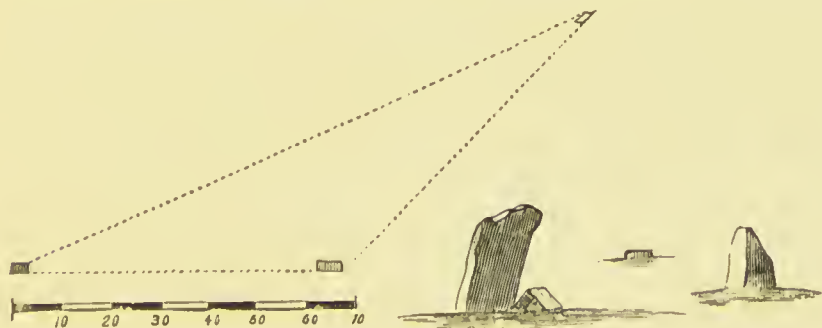
Passed along the tops of the rocks, the way a fine lawn about 2 miles long, called the Villians of Ure. The rocks hollowed out into numerous Geos of vast dimensions, and in one place we see a couple of chasms at a great distance from the sea, into which, however, it runs by under-ground passages, every surge, with great fury. The rocks all round iron stone.

Here the ruins of the Burgh of Howland, built in a loch, fortified towards the land with a very thick rampart of vast stones. We pulled down here, likewise, part of the wall in search of any cement that might have been made use of, as a friend hinted to me there was sometimes a kind of vitrified stuff used in such buildings, found none; the heart of the wall has been filled with lesser stones, and the interstices with rubbish. The sea here has vast force, makes great impression on the rocks, tears up stones of

many hundredweight, and throws them quite up on the land. Several insulated rocks round these shores, as Maiden Skerry, Ofra Skerry, inhabited by the greater Gulls.

Went round the rock heads to Hamna Voe, the next fishing station in this parish. This is a small but excellent harbour, enclosed by land on all sides, except a very narrow entrance. Here are but few boats, mostly belonging to one gentleman. The fish are split in a different manner here from the rest of Schetland, only the three upper joints of the back-bone are cut out, being designed for the Irish market; whereas, elsewhere they pull out one half. The lower grass grounds here covered with the *Jacobæa foliis longis integris et mucronatis*. Mor. His. III., p. 110. Lin. Fl. Suec. 752.

Without the enclosure that surrounds Hamna Voe, was shewn what the country people call the Giant's Grave. It is a monument of standing stones, originally has consisted of three stones, one of them now much shortened of its original dimensions, and the third broke off by the earth. Tradition is quite silent about it, except the former notion, the stones have been brought from the neighbouring sea rocks, about a quarter of a mile. The dimensions are but small, and may be measured by the annexed scale.



From this monument, crossed a mossy road, dangerous for horses travelling even in the height of summer, back to Hillswick. The parish church, the neatest in Schetland; in this they far outdo us in Orkney; nay, I have seldom seen finer and cleaner kept country churches in any part of Scotland than the new churches in Schetland, a very few excepted.

*Thursday, July 21st.*—Went for the next fishing station called Rona's Voe. In my way thither, called at Uriefirth, a house so remarkably situated as to be in continual danger from thunder. It has been struck several times, and everything of glass shivered in ten thousand pieces, spirits dried up in casks and glasses; in a word, everything thrown into confusion. The house stands opposite to a valley formed by two opposite hills, and seems in the way of the current of lightning, which subjects it so often to this inconveniency.

Rona's Voe runs about 4 miles up the country, it surrounds a part of Rona's Hill, the highest in these islands. At the narrowest part of the Voe numbers of hovels, built by the fishermen for their summer's accommodation. They fish on the same grounds, and with much the same success, with others in this part of the country.

The ascent from Rona's Voe to the hill is steep and rocky. On this side the hill is bare and wild, scarce covered with a turf. From this hill we have a fine extensive prospect of the greatest part of Schetland; and, in general, a dismal view it is, consisting of ridges of barren mountains, which totally obscure any cultivated scraps, and present only their blackest sides to the spectator.

As one ascends Rona's Hill he sees nothing around but bare rocks and mist, of which it is seldom clear (at this

time we enjoyed a specimen of the latter, which wet us to the skin), with here and there a few scattered plants among the stones. I observed the *Alchemilla alpina*, Fl. Suec. 142; *Polygonum viviparum*, Fl. Suec. 340; *Arbutus alpina*, *Ib.* 359; with several others of the more ordinary Alpine plants.

On the very top is the remains of a small building, circular on the outside, the cavity and entrance still remaining entire; the former capable of containing six people, covered with very large stones, but so low that one cannot stand upright in it. No doubt it has formerly had a different appearance from what its outside now presents us, as it is much in ruins, and the stones have been sometime ago piled up into a spire for the convenience of fishermen at sea. By its situation it is well placed for discovering what friends or enemies might approach these isles, and no doubt has not only served the purpose of a watch tower to explore the marine waste, but to spread and continue the alarm thro' the whole country. The east side of the hill is better clad than the rest, neither is it so steep, but one can ride to the top. Round the foundation is said to be thirty miles.

Proceeded to Uyea and Fetheland, other fishing stations on this coast, over a tract of dismal mountains; however, notwithstanding the badness of the roads, this day's long walk afforded a sight of several most beautiful spots of arable and pasture ground, with the arrival of the Uyea and Fetheland fishing boats, some of which had got 10, others 12, scores of Ling, besides small Tusk. These are all dried at Fetheland, a good beach on a peninsula, secured from the ocean by a pretty high land, but rocky toward the main island.

*Friday, July 22nd.*—Turned southward by the east side



of Rona's Hill, by Skea, Olaberry, and Gluss Isle, towards Mavisgrind. This day's walk, the hills covered with heath, interspersed with green spots, which afford pasture for numbers of Sheep and Shelties of various sizes. At Olaberry formerly a church, but this now in ruins. Several small holms in the North Voe, much frequented by Seals of the ordinary size.

In Northmaven much loss of men at sea; seldom a year passes but some perish here; a few weeks ago three boats with 16 men were lost, leaving behind them 11 widows and 46 children; the remaining two were miraculously saved by a neighbouring boat's crew, who, at the outmost danger of their lives, picked them up from the jaws of destruction. This happened in a sudden gale of wind, and the great danger is when the wind blows up while they are hawling their lines. This service costs a deal of time and labour, and, considering the expense, makes them very loth to cut them and run for the shore, and often hanging by them they lose both lines and lives. Saw a woman who had lost her husband, four sons, several brothers, and other male friends, all at sea, and seemed indeed a widow, the last of all her race.

Many of the stone weapons mentioned above are found in this parish, particularly 7 in one place, but all dispersed before my arrival. They were found underground, forming a circle, the points toward the centre. In a moss here was informed of a woman's corpse which had been dug up, that had lien above 80 years, and notwithstanding this length of time every part was so well preserved that the muscles were discernible, nay, even the gloves on her hands, and the hair of her head; which shews the styptic quality of the waters of our mosses.



Several remarkable geniuses here; I heard of one Williamson, a common fisherman, who has a remarkable mechanical turn, especially for imitation. I saw in the booth of Hilswick a model of a very complex mill, for performing bleaching work, which he is said to have made after viewing the original once, and that but a short time. The model performed every operation of the original, is turned with a winch, the whole about 2 feet square. In a word, this man is remarkable for many mechanical performances, but is under great disadvantages, never having it in his power to improve his genius as he might elsewhere. Passed Mavisgrind once more for Busta, stayed one night, and next day went to the Minister's of Delting, where confined for several days by bad weather.

*Copy of a Short Description of the Parish of Northmaven,  
by Mr Jack, the Minister of that Parish.*

“Northmaven in Zetland is a Parish 16 miles long and 10 miles broad, has 1800 inhabitants and many good harbours, as it is much intersected by the sea. In this Parish are five different places or beaches from which the boats go to fish, viz., Stenness, Hamnavoe, Rona's-voe, Uyea, and Fetheland. In all these places about 100 boats are employed from the beginning of June to the second week of August. Each boat has 6 able bodied men, and is furnished with 120 ground lines, each line 55 faths. in length. Of these 100 boats, between 70 and 80 belong to the Parish, the remainder to the neighbouring isles, and Heritors who possess land in the Parish. A boat fitted for the sea, with all her fishing material, is in value about £18 Sterling.”

"The Lings upon an average brought in a season by these boats are about 50,000, besides Tusk and Skates, with a few Cod."

"Articles exported from this Parish are large fish, Herrings, Butter, and single Stockings, but of these a small quantity. The Grain raised in this Parish is sufficient to supply the inhabitants in good crops, but in ordinary years they need from 200 to 400 bolls."

"Rona's hill, the highest hill in this country, is in this Parish; round the bottom of it is 30 miles. At Hilswick, in the middle of the Parish, is the only standing kirk, and this among the best in the country. Cross-kirk, formerly a Popish Chapel, is now in ruins; in its churchyard is a grave-stone which seems to be very old; the few characters which can be made out seem to be Runick. Near this, at Houland, the remains of a Pight's house may be seen, and, at a little distance from Hamnavoe, two stones of about 6 or 8 feet high, and a third of the same kind seems to have been standing at a small distance from them, but now fallen down. A monument of the same kind is still standing in the north part of this Parish, at Housater. To Northmaven belong only one inhabited isle, viz., Lamma, and six or seven small grasing holms."

*Copy of a Paper from Gideon Gifford, Esq. of Busta, anent the Holdings, Divisions of Lands, &c., in Schetland.*

"Whether the Islands of Orkney and Zetland were first peopled from Scotland or Norway is uncertain, our historians being very superficial in the accounts, but it is certain they were long in the possession of the Norwegians, and the most of the inhabitants of Zetland to this day being

Patronymicks, and of Norwegian extract; and all the islands and places in it retain their Norwegian names."

"While Zetland was subject to the Kings of Norway and Denmark, it was governed by a man clothed with a commission from the King to act as judge in all matters, civil as well as criminal, and to receive the King's revenue; he was called the Fowd of Zetland; he exerted an absolute tyrannical power over the poor inhabitants. The country was divided into parishes, and in each of these he appointed an inferior Judge, who was called the Fowd of the Parish, before whom only small matters came, such as neighbourhood and the like. The payment to the Crown was called Scatt, which was paid in butter, oil, and a sort of very coarse cloth called Wadmiel,\* they having no money, being denied the privilege to trade with any person but the Fowd, to whom they were obliged to sell the product they had over and above paying the Crown revenue, for such necessities as he thought proper to supply them with, so that they knew nothing of money. There were at that time no lands belonging to the Crown in Zetland, but had been the property of the first improvers, and by them handed down to their successors by Udal succession, which was no other than the son or next heir taking possession on his father's or last possessor's death, they knowing little about writing. The first way we find property transmitted by write is by a right or Deed called a Soind bill, used at first only by considerable Heritors, the lesser keeping by their Udal succession. The way and nature of the Soind bill

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\* Vademel is a coarse cloth of the natural colour of the wool. For the old method of weaving this, see Pontop. Hist. Norw., II., p. 273.

was thus: The Heritor who had a mind to dispoise his lands prepared an entertainment, and called the Fowd of the country to his house, and three or four of the best men, who being met on the day appointed, the Fowd called a Court, these men sitting with him; the man who was to dispoise compeared, and did there judicially make his will, which the elerk of the court wrote down, and therein he disposed his estate, heritable and moveable, as he inclined; which being done, the elerk of the court read the bill (all parties being previously called), which the dispoiser approving of, the Fowd and these sitting with him did sign and put their seals to it, and being reeorded in the court books, the prinicipal was delivered to the dispoiser. If it was not to take place till after his death he kept it, and his heirs succeeded according to the will thereof; but if he was to sell his lands, after acknowledging that he had received full value for them the dispoiser delivered the Soind bill to the purchaser. Follows the divisions and value of land in Zetland." It will be proper here to premise that the names of the divisions of land in Shetland are quite different from those in Orkney, and where they are the same yet they express quite a different quantity of land; for example, the Pennyland in Orkney contains many\* of the same name in Shetland. Our Ure or Ursland (Eyre) contains 18 Pennylands, or the highest nominal division we have; the Shetland Ure is the 8th of a mark, or the lowest they name. Their table seems

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\* Pennylands in both countries are of different dimensions, probably according to the additions they have received by improvement to their original measure.

the original division of these isles, if we may trust Torfæus, in his history, p. 169, "*continet autem qualibet marca terræ octo eyrer seu uncus.*" Further, it is to be observed that the term Pennyland in Orkney signifies simply quantity, whereas in Schetland it likewise marks the quality, and according to the value of the land every Mark contains more or fewer Pennies. The rent due to the proprietor of the land is fixed to  $1\frac{1}{3}$  Mark of butter and  $1\frac{1}{3}$  Shill. Scots money, or Penny Ster., so that when we know of how many Pennies a Mark consists, we at the same time know the quality and rent of it.

"THE TABLE.—8 Ures make 1 Mark.  
18 Marks make 1 Last.

"Table shewing the payments made by a Mark of land of all denominations, from 4d. to 12 Pennies:—

1	Mark of 4	Pennyland	pays	$5\frac{1}{3}$	Mark	Butter	and	$5\frac{1}{4}$	Scots money.
1	"	6	"	8	"			8/-	"
1	"	8	"	$10\frac{2}{3}$	"			10/8	"
1	"	9	"	12	(or $\frac{1}{2}$ Lispond)			12/-	"
1	"	10	"	$13\frac{1}{3}$	"			13/4	"
1	"	12	"	16	"			16/-	"

"N.B.—There are no lands of 5, 7, or 11 Pennies the Mark."

### DELTING.

Tuesday, July 26th.—Took a trip for the hills of Delting, found no remarkable plants there, and of the bird kind none but the Curlew, and the Sparrow Hawk which builds in the hill cliffs, and makes vast havock among the lesser birds, nay, even Pigeons are not safe, tho' to appearance stronger than their enemy. A most romantic

The Shetland marks correspond to the Orkney marks (the penny land val. is delting)



bottom round the head of Olnafirthvoe, which diseloses itself all at once, presenting a large valley eovered with fine Corn, and Cattle Pasture, the latter pretty numerous, and the hills swarming with Sheep. Wool has always been a valuable article in Schetland, now more so than ever; within this last half century it has risen from 5*sh.* Ster. to 13*sh.* 4*d.* per lispound, or 26*lb.* weight, owing to the vast demand for their coarse Stoekings.

*Wednesday, July 27th.*—Crossed the Parish of Delting, thro' deep moss grounds, for Yell. Observed near the kirk of Sealsta, in the bank where the sea had wore away the earth, a continued stratum of large pieees of wood, in a horizontal position, a few inches above the hard gravel, covered with about 10 feet of moss. This stratum is eontinued as far as I eould seareh the whole length of this worn bank, and probably round the bay; it consists of pieees from 8 inehees to half an inch diamr., roots, stoeks, and, in a word, all parts of a tree;\* seems Hazle and Aquatick woods, but so much rotten that no part ean be moved. This, however, is a proof of trees having been here at some period, but this seems to have been very aneient, if we compute from the vast disproportion there is between the thiekness of moss below the stratum with that above, and at the same time eonsider the length of time the latter would require to grow, both in height and solidity, both which it has in a great degree, partieularly towards the bottom. The horizontal position seems to indicate that they have all fallen at the same time, or have

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\* In many places of Orkney and Schetland the peat diggers often find great heaps even of the leaves of trees.



subsided after some terrestrial convulsion, a partial or universal flood; but however this is, are a plain proof of wood having been here of old, and might be a lesson to the inhabitants to enquire what woods are fittest for, and would be most valuable in, their country. On the east side of Delting the hills very deep, scarce passable, much cut into bays, bordered by small Schetland farms. Round the shores, at different distances, observed several Pight's castles, but all in ruins.

Passed Yellsound, a rapid tide, not without danger to seafaring people, from the blind rocks that are scattered up and down thro' it, but these are well known to the neighbouring inhabitants, who serve as pilots.

## YELL.

Landed at West Sandwiek, in Yell, according to information the most beautiful side of the island, and, indeed, if the whole were equal to this, it would easily shake off the dismal character of barrenness which it has long laboured under. Here is a fine sandy beach, surrounded with fields of Corn that would disgrace few Corn countries. This, however, is but a false appearance, for tho' I saw several other tolerable spots to the eastward of this about Sound, Brough, and Burravoe, &c., yet the island in general is boggy, mountainous and barren, fit for nothing but Cattle pasture, nor even very good for the last, the grass being hard,\* affording but little nourishment, tho' this is all they

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\* Consisting mostly of the *Juncus squarrosus*, Fl. Succ. 302, called in Orkney Burra.

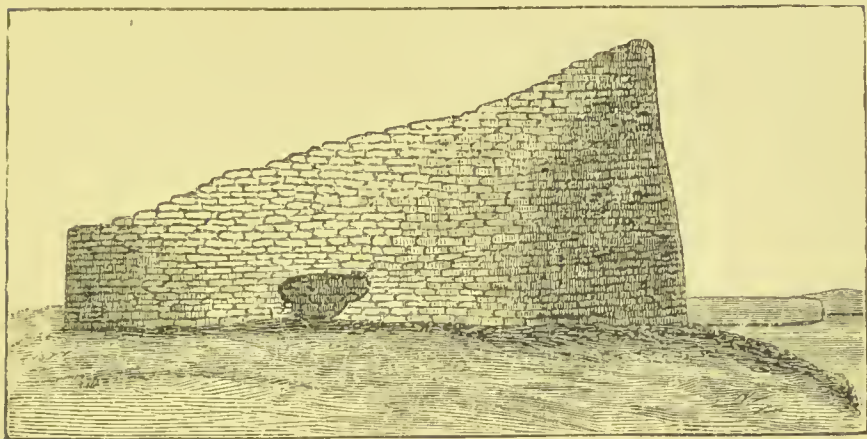
have for their Shelties, which, notwithstanding their hard treatment, preserve their spirits in a wonderful manner, even above what they are when taken more care of. As I proceeded through the isle the face of it changed for the worse, and continued so till I came to Mid Yell, where it affords a momentary relief by the bays which there almost cut it in two, and have their banks inhabited by a few families of note in Schetland, and several farms. This sudden gleam is of no duration, but succeeded by worse, if worse can be in N. Yell, which is almost entirely covered with heath bogs and marshes, except about the skirts of Houland and opposite to Unst, where we are again relieved by something better than the general run of this island. Yell is 16 long miles in length, the breadth very unequal, as it is cut into many bays, each of which is an excellent but almost useless harbour, but the breadth in several places is 8 miles; consists of three parishes, but thinly inhabited, by reason of the barrenness of the soil, which is scarce capable of improvement.

Round the shores, and in some lochs, the Pight's castles continued; there are nine in Yell, but all more or less in ruins. The most entire is at Burraness, 20 feet high, the other dimensions as follow:—

Height of the highest part,	.	.	.	.	Feet	20	0
Thickness of the double wall,	.	.	.	.	.	10	0
Outermost wall,	.	.	.	.	.	4	0
Passage between the walls,	.	.	.	.	.	2	0
Inner wall,	.	.	.	.	.	4	4

Besides a scarcement of 18 inches at about  
10 feet high, but this not easily measured  
as the inside is filled up with rubbish.

Inside diameter,	.	.	.	.	.	.	31	0
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BROUGH OF BURRANESS.

This Brough is now in the midst of a field of Corn, which surrounds it on all sides, and reaches to the very brink of the rock, not even leaving a path, so confined are the Schetlanders in soil proper for raising this scarce article.

The rocks round Yell moderately high, but not much frequented by sea fowl. The Niep of Gravaland furnishes a retreat for a couple of Sea Eagles, who have built here for ages. At the foot of this rock observed vast numbers of Seals asleep on the stones below, but none remarkable for bulk. A gentleman shewed me a Crossbill which had been caught here, but died soon after, and it appeared to be famished. It is no inhabitant here.

Yell affords Peat for fuel to several of the inhabitants of Fetlar, who are not so happily situated in this particular, and indeed can give little else, but is an inexhaustible peat moss.

## UNST.

*Thursday, July 28th.*—Crossed Blomel Sound for Unst, the most northerly of the larger Schetland Isles. The first thing that attracts the attention of a stranger in Unst is the Castle of Mounas, now roofless, built on a gentle ascent facing the Isle of Fetlar. This was erected in the year 1598, by a gentleman of the name of Bruee, who for some misdemeanour was obliged to retire hither, where some of his descendants lived after him, but are now out of it and scattered thro' the rest of the isles. The castle has been a very fine piece of workmanship in the old taste, the walls remaining as straight as when it was built. On the two opposite corners are round towers, rising from the foundation, containing two lower octagonal apartments; the third story round. The castle is three story high, the lower vaulted. Above the gate is the following inscription, beautifully engraved on a table of freestone, which, tho' it contains a strict charge, the old man's posterity seem to have paid very little regard to:—

“List ze to know this building quha began?  
Laurence the Bruce, He was that worthy man,  
Quha earnestly his airis and afspring prayis  
To help and not to hurt this wark alwayis.”

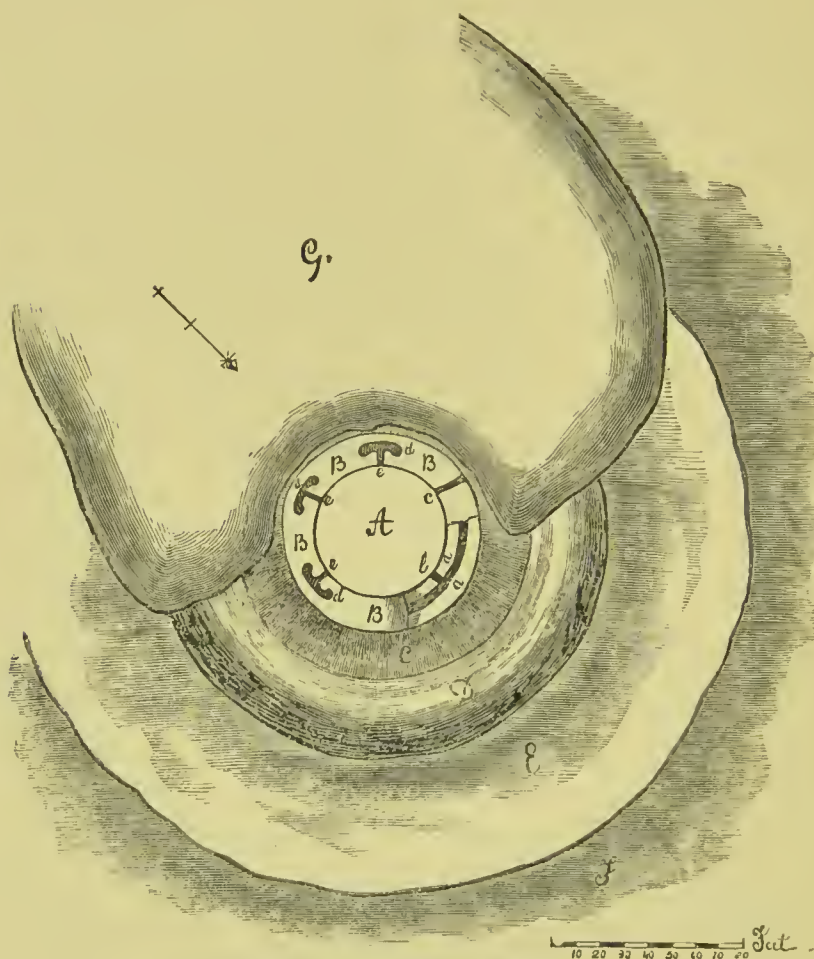
The island round Uyeasound, where I landed, is hard and bare, intermixed with very good Corn fields, but these laboriously won from the rocks; round Mounas Castle, the soil thicker, and the fields pretty extensive. The common moor stones of this island are very various, mostly green, or green and white serpentine. In many places we see large

pieces of rock, composed of long and fine filaments, like asbestos, but quite rigid; of this last great plenty. Talk of a brownish colour, and capable of being split into inexpressible thinness, of an inch to two inches diameter very frequent. Crystals of a fine water found in the interstices of the rocks pretty ordinary. These are cut for buttons and buckles, and exceed the Bristol stones, both in beauty and hardness.

In this day's walk saw three Broughs, the first quite razed, except the foundation, the stones being made use of to build a pier. The second, much in the same condition, on the sea-bank, well fortified with two very deep ditches, and high ramparts towards the land. The third, at Snaburgh, in a loch, fortified partly by the loch and partly by a wet ditch and rampart, composed of large stones, and at the foot of the wall a small dry ditch. Here, too, the double wall is visible, as in the rest, but the first story has large hollow apartments, not round as in the Burgh of Burrafirth (*Vide* p. 126 *sup.*), but oblong; widest at each end following the course of the wall, as in the figure.

The use of these apartments is probably much the same with those in Burrafirth, in Sandness, tho' these are much more capacious.





SNABURGH, IN UNST—PLAN.

EXPLANATION.—*A*. The area ; *B*. The plan of the foundation ; *C*. The dry ditch ; *D*. The rampart ; *E*. The wet ditch, cut in many places thro' the rocks, much filled up, and now dry ; *F*. The live earth around higher than the ditch ; *G*. The loch ; *a*. A part of the double wall, or a fragment higher than the lower story ; *b*. The entrance to the passage between the walls ; *c*. The main entrance ; *d*. The apartments in the lower story ; *e*. The entrances into these, most of which are choked up with rubbish.



*Friday, July 29th* —Crossed the island towards Balta-sound over a very bare, thin moor, scarce fit for anything. The Voe of Balta, surrounded with cultivated grounds, notwithstanding the thinness of the soil, producing common Oats, Bear, and Pease, both white and grey. Here saw among the first instances of enclosing in Schetland; the proprietor has fenced his grounds with substantial stone walls, and sub-divided them with the same, but the thinness of the soil round him is a very discouraging hindrance to his improvements. On the east coast of this day's walk are two uninhabited islands; Huna, good for Pasture, and Balta, sandy and swarming with Rabbits, not much frequented by sea fowl; greatly cut by the sea, which has forced passages almost thro' it in several places.

The Rabbits of Balta draw the Eagles often that way, and sometimes the Eagle Owl; the remains of one of this last I saw here, the only specimen, tho' a bad one, I had seen of the bird.

Otters very numerous and large about Unst; I measured one in a gentleman's house here which was 59 inches, from the nose to the tail, but different in nothing from the common fresh water Otter, but in a rougher coat. Seals, too, abound. A gentleman told me he sometime ago had the skin of a Seal 12 feet long and 7 broad, but those of these dimensions are very rare, and seldom approach the land.

The Voe of Balta is a fine harbour, well fenced, and pretty well frequented by fishermen. Ships may either enter it from the north or south; but must be very careful in the north entrance of a blind rock, which lies nearest the land side; however, this may be avoided by keeping the

middle of the channel, steering directly south till they bring out the house of Hammer, or that by itself next the sea, when they are to stand boldly in for the harbour. Fishing does not succeed so well here as on the west side of the country, and their lines are shorter, usually about 40 bughts, or 2200 fathoms. The ordinary produce of a boat in a good year may be 300 Ling.

Passed by the middle of the island, thro' a fine bottom of two miles, covered with arable grounds, and pretty well inhabited; in a word, the internal parts of Unst seem best peopled of any Schetland Isle.

In this day's walk was shown on the top of a preeipice called the Heog (or Height), a heap of stones called by tradition a place of execution, and at the foot of the rock another heap, called the House of Justice, from which one ascends by steps to the former. Tradition says that whatever criminal ascended the steps of Hanger Heog never came down alive. Whether these things are true or not, is hard at this time to say, nor does the now appearance of these heaps give any light in the matter; but to countenance the tradition, I was informed of two bodies, which were supposed to be executed criminals, and found some years ago in the bottom of the lower heap. They have both been tumbled over and over, and are in great confusion.

As one goes to the Minister's he observes several small crosses stuek in the earth, marking according to report the places where several malefactors had been slain in pursuit. The adjaacent hill is thence called Cruelfield. At the Church of Norwiek a Popish Chapel, pretty entire, particularly the altar, which is eut asbestos; every grave is marked with a cross at the head, the only remain (and that, to them,

insignificant) of Popery to be found among them. A most charming valley opposite to the Minister's, full of Corn and Grass, enough in part to redeem these isles from the general epithet of barren, they have been so long branded with. Went along the rocky coast towards Scaw, the most northerly point of His Majesty's British dominions, the higher grounds covered with fine Grass, and the bottoms with Grain; reached the northermost end of the island, which is 8 miles long and 3 broad, by far the best inhabited of all the Schetland Isles, contains about 1800 souls.

The north shores of Unst are generally high, but so shelving that one can walk to the bottom of the steepest, except the Gloup, which is perpendicular, and full of Kitty-wakes, numbers of which are annually caught, by letting down hooks and jerking them into the young birds.

*Saturday, July 30th.*—Went to Saxevord,\* the highest hill in Unst, the top of which is the site of a small watch-house, the lower apartment of which is under ground, covered with a single stone, over which in all probability there has been another, tho' now in ruins.

Having now reached the most northerly part of Britain, turned my head S. West, crossed a pretty large burn, the outlet of a loch of two miles, full of large Trout, and indeed every one of the many lochs of Unst swarm with these. Some are of a very large size. I heard of one, but what species I could not learn, that weighed 23 lbs.

The westerly part of this day's walk consisted chiefly of uncultivated grounds, only useful for pasture, but maintaining 1000s. of fine Sheep. Lapwings sometimes seen in

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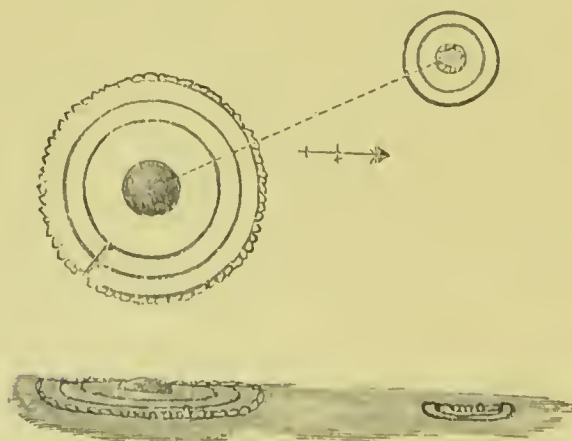
\* So called from Saxe, a fabulous Schetlandic giant.

Unst, but never build there; as also Bats, but both very uncommon. Observe Skua for the last time in Schetland; on Saxevord saw three pair.

In my way southward observed on a hill, about a mile to the west of the Heog (the soil swampy), two circular monuments composed of one stone, and three shallow circles cut from the live earth, the whole surrounding a sort of nucleus or small tumulus in the centre. What these were tradition is entirely silent; there are two here of different dimensions, and one larger than either, at about a mile's distance. Follow the dimensions of all.

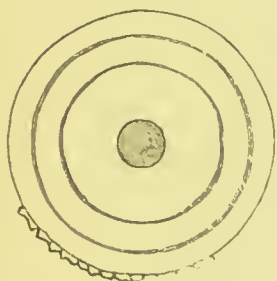
Diameter of the outermost or stone circle	. Feet	55	0		
Second or outermost earth circle	. . . . .	45	0		
Innermost earth circle	. . . . .	33	6		
Nucleus	. . . . .	10	6		
Distance between the centre of this and the neighbouring monument of the same kind but less, and having only two circles	}			80	0
Diameter of the outermost lesser circle	. . . . .	22	0		
„ of the second	— . . . . .	17	0		
„ of the Nucleus	. . . . .	7	6		

Plan and view of these monuments follow.



The third of these circles is at a long mile's distance, near the church.

Diameter of the stone circle, little of which now remains . . . . .	}	Feet 67 0	
First earth circle . . . . .		54	9
Second — . . . . .		40	0
Nucleus . . . . .		12	0



The tumulus has been composed of rough stones and earth of the same kind with the adjacent, but has been so much teized over that it is hard to say whether it has been intended for a burial place or what else, and tradition says nothing to clear up the

point. Could observe no discoloured earth, nor any remain of a bone, only a small hillock supported by stones from the neighbouring common.

*Monday, August 1st.*—Proceeded southward thro' a fine valley round the church, the Corn good, and in large quantities, especially as one goes towards Yell. Near Mr Scott's, of Greenwal, observed an obelisk or standing stone, and to the westward of his house a rock or neck of land called the Mul (*Vide* p. 55), containing a pretty space of grass ground, the narrowest part of which is crossed by a very strong wall or fortification, effectually securing it from all attacks from the land side, as the height of the rock does from the sea. Within the wall, and at the place where assailants could have the easiest access, are still to be seen the foundations of a number of small huts or houses, occupied in all probability by the inhabitants in times of publick disturbance. I should imagine they chose

this situation in preference to others on account of having room for their cattle and other goods. The place is not only rendered strong by the foresaid rampart, but is so by nature, as the ascent to the wall is rocky and rugged, except at the entrance, or the spot where the huts have been placed, where the access is easier.

At a small distance, and opposite to the Mul, is Burgh-holm, a rock on which is a Picht's house or castle, now much worn away by time and the action of the sea.

Let it be observed, once for all, that the shores round Schetland are in general high and unfit for tang or kelp making.

*Tuesday, August 2nd.*—Visited the small islands between Unst and Fetlar, of which the most considerable is Uyea (whence the name of the Sound), nearly a mile long, inhabited by one family, of servants, labourers of a single farm, the greatest part of the island being a bare thin brake.

Half Grunie, Grunie, Linga of Urie, as also Linga of Yell, in Blomel Sound, are uninhabited, and only fit for pasturing a few sheep and cattle, for which they are well adapted.

*Substance of a Paper concerning Unst, put into my hands by the Rev. Mr William Archibald, Minister of Unst.*

"The Island of Unst is the most northerly of the Schetland Isles, lies in  $61^{\circ} 15'$  N., in length 8 miles, in breadth 3. Contains four pretty large lakes, one of these two miles long, and all of them well stored with Trout and Eel. No rivers in this island, but several large burns, perennial springs in plenty, but no waterfalls. On the west side of the island, a ridge of mountains stretches from N. to S.,



well furnished with Turf for fuel, and pasturage for cattle, the east side generally much lower and very rocky. There are no remarkable caves in the island, except the impressions which the sea makes under the high banks. Some of these run a considerable way under the land; one of them presenting you with a very picturesque scene, the roof being supported by a natural range of pillars, which, viewed at a certain distance, seem as if they had felt the chisel, but viewed nearer appear quite rude."

"Storms are frequent here, but no earthquakes have ever been felt. With respect to diseases, we have no great ground of complaint. Fevers seldom appear unless imported, nor do the small-pox ever obtain except by the same means, and in that case, both generally prove epidemical, and often prove very mortal, especially the small-pox."

"The practice of inoculation has been introduced here with great success; of near a hundred inoculated by Mr Edmonston two only died. There have occurred in this island several instances of an inveterate scurvy, which commonly goes under the name of the leprosy. It generally baffles the efforts, not only of the surgeons here, but even those of the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh. The yellow jaundice is pretty frequent among us, but women generally undertake the cure, and with tolerable success, if it is not complicated with any other distemper. They perform the cure by a powder made of Wilks and their shells dried and bruised together."

"There is one shocking distemper which has of late years prevailed pretty much, especially among young women, and was hardly known 30 or 40 years ago. About that

period only one person had it. The inhabitants give it the name of convulsion fits, and, indeed, in its appearance it something resembles an epilepsy. In its first rise it began with a palpitation of the heart, of which they complained for a considerable time; it at length produced swooning fits, in which people seized with it would lie motionless upwards of an hour. At length, as the distemper gathered strength, when any violent passion seized them, or on a sudden surprise, they would all at once fall down, toss their arms about, writhe their bodies into many odd shapes, crying out all the while most dismally, throwing their heads about from side to side, with their eyes fixed and staring. At first this distemper attacked one female, but she being seized at church, the disease was communicated to others, but whether by the influence of fear or sympathy is not easy to determine. However this was, our publick assemblies, especially at church, became greatly disturbed with the noise of their outeries. This distemper always prevails most violently during the summer time, in which season, for many years, we were hardly one Sabbath free. In these few years past it has not prevailed so extensively, and upon the whole seems on the decline. One thing remarkable in this distemper is, that as soon as the fit is over, the persons affected with it are generally as lively and brisk as before, and if it happens at any of their publick diversions, as soon as they recover, they mix with their companions, and continue their amusement as vigorously as if nothing had happened. Few men are troubled with this distemper, which seems more confined to women, but there are instances of its seizing men, and girls of six years of age. With respect to the nature of

this disease, people who have made enquiry about it differ, but most imagine it hysterical; however, this seems not entirely the case, as men and children are subject to it; however, it is a new disease in Schetland, but whence imported none can imagine."

"Several of the people of this island live to a good old age, some now alive have numbered eighty years, and others ninety, one counted his 105. Bards we have none, but many self-taught artificers in the cooper, wright, shoemaker, and tailor crafts."

"The number of inhabitants has been on the increase these many years, owing to plenty and the absence of epidemical distempers. The present number of young and old is 1776."

"The principal commercial articles from this island are Butter, Fish, and Oil, which are exported to foreign markets."

"Oats and Bear are the only grains generally raised in this place, of which, one year with another, there is sufficient to supply the inhabitants, though in very bad crops a considerable import is necessary."

"The people of this isle manure both for Bear and Oats. For the latter, they spread some cow's dung all over the ridges during the winter season, or lay it in heaps, and after tillage spread it. For Bear two sorts of manure are used; one sort is the produce of the stable and byres. In managing this, their method differs somewhat from that used in Scotland, and is perhaps preferable. In forming their dunghills they begin with a layer of mould, over which is placed another of dung, and so stratum super stratum, till they make up the quantity required. Some

add to the above a layer of sea-weed, which has also a good effect. The above is their poorest manure. The strongest is prepared within the byres by the following method:—After clearing the byre in the spring, they begin their process by laying over the floor a stratum of grass or short heather, then follows a layer of mould, and over all a covering of cow's dung, and thus they continue till seed-time, when the stables are generally filled to the height of four or five feet. This manure is by far the richest of any known here as being strongly impregnated with the salts of urine from the cattle. Seaware is likewise much used as a manure here, especially what is thrown up in March and April, which is laid in heaps till it rots,\* and then spread on the land. An attempt was made some years ago to cultivate flax and hemp in this island, but it did not succeed. Potatoes are raised in great plenty."

"As to our superstitions, these are greatly forgot, very few remain now to be found worth noticing, and these only amongst the oldest and most ignorant. They believe much in witchcraft, don't like their way should be crossed when they go a fishing, particularly by the minister. When they see a funeral, they lift three clods and throw one by one after the corpse, but can assign no reason for so doing. There have been in the days of Popery no less than 22 chapels, the island being divided into 22 parts, called Scat-hills. In one of these (Norwick, *vide* p. 154), which has

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\* With all due deference to the Schetland and Orkney farmers, I should think this custom of rotting the ware before it is laid on the land would hurt it much, as it is certain it spends the greatest part of its salts in putrefying, which stand in pools around it. Would it not be better to lay it on the land fresh from the strand?

been built of fine stone and excellent cement, the altar is as entire as when first built. The design of dividing the island into Scathills seems to have been for establishing a regular and uniform policy, that no one might encroach upon his neighbour's property in digging turf, pasturing sheep, &c., the inhabitants being confined to their respective Scathills for procuring their necessaries, and the inhabitants of such a division as does not afford peat, &c., must pay for these to their neighbours."

"Diversions obtain only in winter, and consist in dancing on some stated days about and after Christmas, when they meet in considerable numbers, men and women, and divert themselves in playing at cards, &c., till the night is well spent. There is one species of dance which seems peculiar to themselves, in which they do not proceed from one end of the floor to the other in a figure, nor is it after the manner of a Scotch reel; but a dozen or so form themselves into a circle, and taking each other by the hand, perform a sort of circular dance, one of the company all the while singing a Norn Visick. This was formerly their only dance, but has now almost given entire way to the reel. A social dram of Gin or Hamburgh Waters is their sole entertainment on these occasions, if it can be had, if not they must part with dry lips, however this is not often the case."

"There is a variety of earths and clays in this island, also some coarse Marble, great plenty of Iron-stone; some of this thought exceeding good ore. Rocks of Asbestos, and many pieces of Crystal. No forest wood, but some small pieces of fossil wood found in the mosses."

"Our gardens here produce everything of the vegetable



tribe that is useful for the table, as Carrot, Parsnep, Turnip, Cabbage, Spinage, with a variety of others ; nor are our fields wanting in many herbs which might be worthy the attention of the Botanist."

"Along the west side of the island the rocks are generally high, and great numbers of sea fowl resort there to hatch. These rocks are furnished with benches from a little above the sea to a considerable height, upon which the sea fowls roost and hatch in vast variety, with great safety from the weather, but not from the hands of men, who in the month of July climb up and catch great numbers both for the flesh and feathers, which last are sold to good purpose."

"There are several stones of the marble kind found here, one of which I have in my possession. It is about 4 inches long and 3 broad, artificially smoothed into the form of a hatchet,\* sharp all round the edges. Eight of these stones were found some years ago on the hollow top of a rock, covered with rubbish. The original use of these stones (many of which, and of different shapes, are found in this country) is not easy to be guessed, perhaps they may have been stuck into shafts to serve the purpose of offensive weapons." So far Mr Archibald.

### FETLAR.

*Wednesday, Aug. 3rd.*—Crossed for Hascusie, inhabited by a single family, a wet swampy soil ; whence returning I landed at Fetlar, which next to Unst is the best cultivated

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\* *Vide* p. 118, fig. 1st.



of all the N. Isles, and seems best fitted for tillage. It is 4 miles long and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  broad, inhabited by between 500 and 600 people; the soil in general thin, but the valleys abounding with Corn and Grass, both good in their kinds. They have a good breed of Cattle here, owing to an intermixture with the Danish breed.

At Udsta examined the phænomenon of the Compass taken notice of by Brand (p. 104); found it as that gentleman says, disordered much, and without any apparent cause. When I placed it upon the north side of the little hill, the Flower-de-luce pointed south; when to the west, it pointed east, and so on. I immediately suspected the cause to be in some mineral, and having every instrument for digging ready, I immediately dug where it seemed most disturbed, and when I arrived at the rock the Compass seemed to be attracted by some particular points of it, more than others. I broke off pieces of the rock, which had the same effect on the needle as an ordinary loadstone, and like it every piece had a north and south pole, which attracted the needle accordingly. It seems a species of the ores of Iron that can be drawn by a loadstone, for upon grinding a small bit of it I found it would fly to the stone\* as fast as iron filings, but not of itself attract the smallest bit of that metal. It cannot be true that this mine affects ships' Compasses in passing, as Brand alleges; I could not observe the least effect at a few yards' distance; even when I took up the Compass in my hand it seemed very little affected by it, much less can it be felt at sea, which is a long way off.

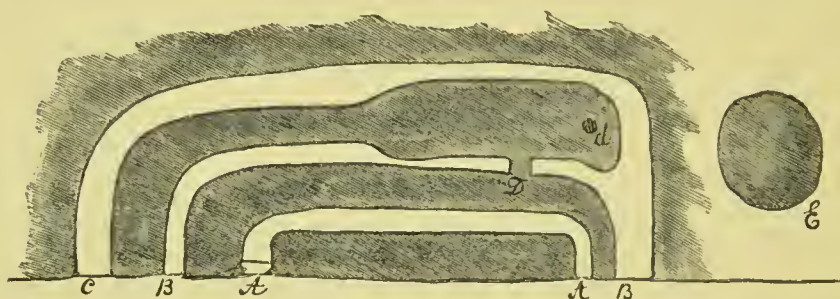
At a small distance from the booth of Urie is a vein

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\* Either to the loadstone or artificial magnet, for I tried it with both.

of Copper, but seemingly poor; much intermixed with spar.

At a mile's distance was shewn a fortification called Snaburgh of Fetlar, which, tho' the name tells us to be of the same era with the others, differs much in construction. It is now much in ruins, owing to the falling away of the bank, but never has been circular; has consisted of a central oblong stone work, surrounded with a double ditch and wall, according to the following plan:—



EXPLANATION.—*A. A.* Is the body of the place, at least what now remains of it; *B. B.* The first wall, separated from the place by a deep ditch; *C.* A second rampart, probably built for no other end but to secure the well *d.*; *D.* An entrance thro' the wall *B.* to the ditch, in which is the well; *E.* A tumulus.

At a small distance further on is another brough, situate on the top of a small hill; the walls entirely in ruins; without any outworks, as its situation did not require them.

Near this last in a moss were found, wrapt in a raw hide, six pieces of east brass of a very singular figure, the workmanship fine; seemingly designed for fetters. Three of them were jointed, the other three whole. How these fetters (if they are so) came there is a question. Tradition

says nothing of it, and conjecture is uncertain. If we may venture the last, might not these have been part of the lading of the Spanish Armada? It is certain there was one of the ships perished on the Fair Isle, even that which carried the Duke de Medina Sidonia, and who afterwards came over to Dunrossness. Now if any of his people brought these pieces of brass, it is probable they themselves buried them, to prevent their being found about them by the country people, and expose them to their insults; or if they were seized from the wreck by the inhabitants, they might find them useless, and throw them away in their original package. But this is only conjecture.

The arable land in Fetlar consists of several well cultivated valleys, producing Corn nearly sufficient for the inhabitants in ordinary years.

The people of Fetlar strong, large, rawboned men and women. Heard of an instance of very great reach and ingenuity of a Fetlar man in Astronomy. Without further help than the few hints in Gordon's Geographical Grammar, he made surprising progress, contrived an Orrery to solve any of the problems contained there, which it did pretty well. I saw the remains of this instrument, which since his death is much out of order. The wheels and endless screw are of pewter, the planets of cork, set upon wires so bent as not to interfere in their various circumvolutions with regard to one another. This lad was placed an apprentice to a watchmaker, and bid fair to become the first in his business; but worn out probably with intense study, he fell in his youth a sacrifice to his beloved amusement.

Proceeded by the south-west to Lambhoga, a high rock,

abounding with various birds of the roek tribe. Here builds likewise a fine species of Falcon. The description of a young bird as follows. Bill blue, eere greenish blue, erown of the head rust coloured, spotted blaek and reddish. Baek blaekish blue, with a east of dark lead colour, every feather tipt with red. Wings reaching to the point of the tail. Tail blaek, barred or spotted with red. Throat dusky and ferruginous. Breast and belly the same, spotted with blaek. Feet and legs greenish. Breadth between the tips of the wings, 3 feet 6 inehes. This bird was in the possession of Mr Gordon, minister of Fetlar, but was neither arrived at its bulk nor colours; however I take it for the Faleon found so frequent in all our headlands.\* *Au. Fal. Lanarius*; Lin. Syst. 129.

A vast quantity of a hard sort of Fuller's earth to be found here, of a pale white colour; also Talk, from two or three inehes in breadth to a spark.

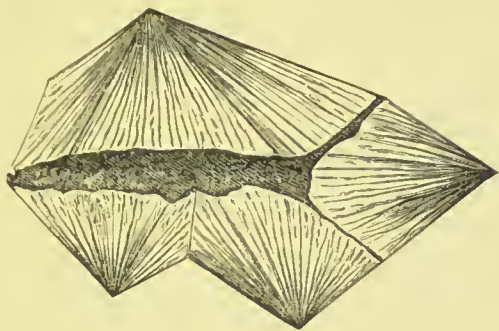
Otters very frequent in an adjaacent loeh well stoeked with small Trout. This loeh throws ashore small quantities of a blaek sand, shining and heavy, something like beat lead ore mixed with talky particles, not observable in any plaee else in these isles.

In several places thro' Fetlar met with a sort of Crystal ? like that figured by Pontopidan, pt. I., pl. 13th.

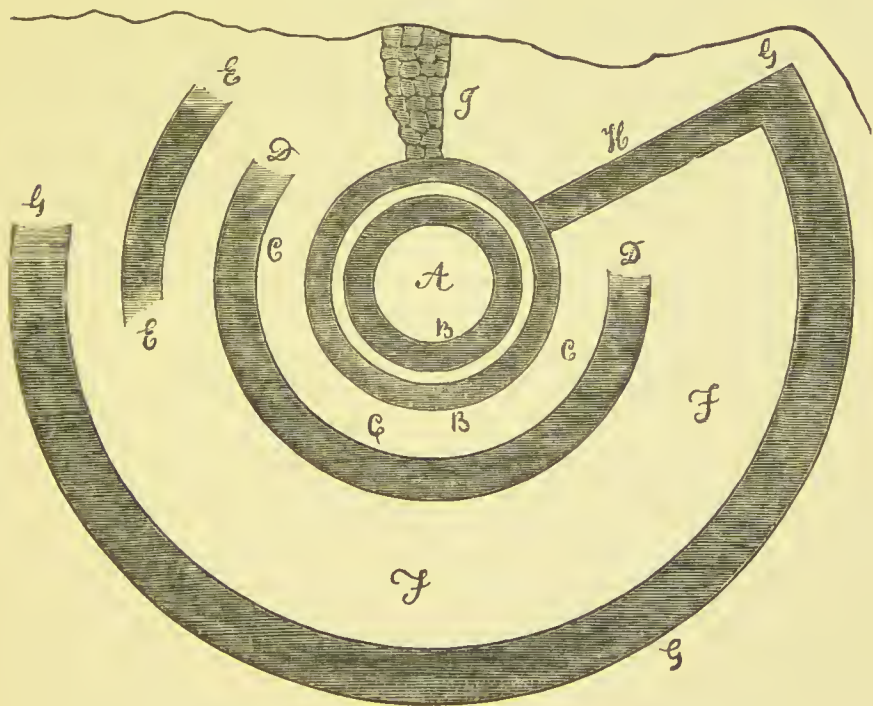



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\* *Vide* p. 47, Wallace's Orkney. 1700.



In my way eastward saw two broughs; one on a rock jutting into the sea, surrounded with walls, as in the figure; the other at some distance from the bank.



BROUGH OF HOUBIE.

*A.* The area; *B.* The double wall; *C.* A space between the wall and rampart; *D.* The first rampart, of mud; *E.* A sort of cheek wall; *F.* The space to the second wall; *G.* The outermost rampart, or second wall; *H.* A sort of flanking wall, joining to the main work; *I.* A sort of causeway laid with stones towards the rock head.



The second had no pereceptible rampart (being placed on an eminence). The walls were hollowed out into apartments similar to those of Snaburgh in Unst. (*Vide* p. 152.) Close by this burgh are the foundations of a number of small houses, entirely in ruins, seemingly of the same age with the burgh itself. They are of an oblong shape, rounded off at the corners; but what use they have served is entirely a secret, as tradition says nothing of it.

At a mile's distance are three eireles similar to, but their dimensions less than, those of Unst. These have a single stone set up in the centre, and are but 36 feet in diameter. Their use, whatever that was, has probably been the same with those formerly mentioned.

Passed to Funzie, the easternmost part of the island, a fishing station where a few boats ply on what they call the Fetlar Håf, or Hav. Saw here a few large Ling and small Tusk. In a booth here are all the apparatus used in diving. These were brought to fish up the plate and silver coin that sunk in the Vandela, a Swedish Indiaman which perished within a short step of this booth. She had on board £22,000 Ster. in various coins, and pieces of silver, about £18,000 of which was fished up.

At a small distance from Funzie is a remarkable instance of the effect of thunder, where a rock of 105 feet long, 10 feet broad, and in some places more than 4 feet thick, was in an instant torn from its bed and broke into three large fragments, besides many lesser ones. Of this a piece of 26 feet long, 10 feet broad, and 4 thick, is simply turned over and jambed to another rock. Another piece off the end of the former, 28 feet long, 17 broad, and 5 thick, is thrown over a pretty high point of a rock to the



distance of 50 yards. The remainder, of about 40 feet long (other dimensions unknown), is thrown still further, but in the same direction, quite into the sea, besides many lesser fragments scattered here and there by the shock.

Turned westward by the Vord or Wart hill, on which three circles, with small square stone buildings in the middle, but much in confusion.

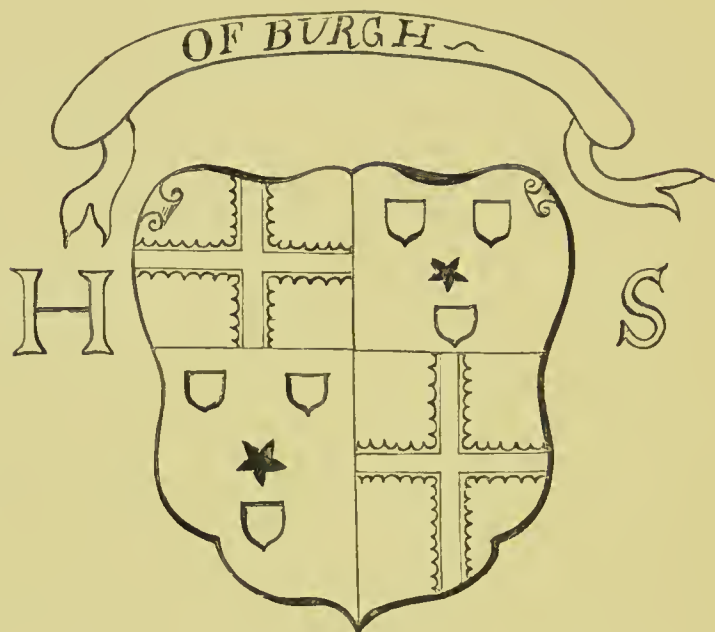
### LUNASTING.

*Monday, Augt. 8th.*—Left Fetlar and landed in Lunasting, in which nothing remarkable except a variety of rocks, intermixed with here and there a small spot of arable and pasture ground; maintains numbers of Sheep, Cattle and small Shelties.

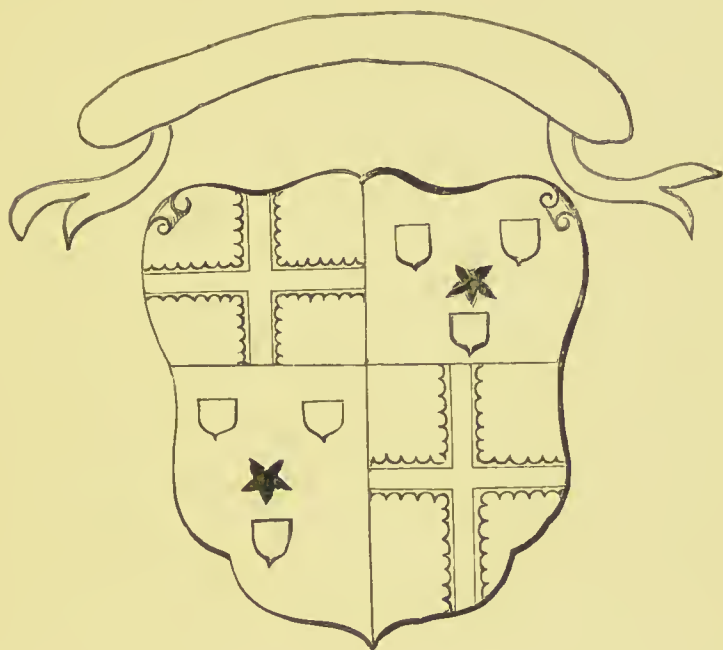
Proceeded thro' Lunasting. Here two good harbours, Vidlonvoe and Duravoe, into the former of which I was told the famous Thurot was obliged to put in great distress, and where he behaved with great civility, according to his general character.

### NESTING.

In Nesting churchyard (the period of this day's walk) observed several curious inscriptions, but these thro' laziness torn to serve as lintels to the new church there. These belonging to the Barons of Burgh are partly set in the wall, and are as follows:—



Remember God  
and every creature  
to live eternally.



IN EARTHNA  
 THIG COTINVAT  
 MANIS BOT  
 SCHADOVARIAT

*Substance of a Paper put into my hands by Andw. Bruce,  
Esqr. of Urie, anent Fetlar.*

"Of Lakes we have several, some of which are stored with fish, as Trouts\* and Eels. Springs in abundance, but none of them remarkable for any virtue. There are several natural caves in the rocks, and many chasms; mountains but few, and not remarkable. We have echoes which repeat any noise three or four times over. Storms are frequent in the autumn and winter; whirlwinds are but rare. Earthquakes I have heard of none so sensible as to be observed, only in 1768 we had the visible signs of a submarine shock,† which threw ashore vast quantities of shell fish of different kinds, and of all sizes, with Conger Eels and other sorts of fish, but all dead. At the same time the sea for several miles round was of a dark muddy colour for several days after."

"The predominant diseases here are much the same with what prevails thro' the rest of Scotland, and the

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\* Mr Gordon, Minister of the Isle, says on this article, "We have Trout of a large size; some have been caught two foot and a half, of a white kind that never visit the ocean. Others there are that run into the small burns from the first of August to the end of September, above 25lbs. weight, equally good, and sometimes preferable to Salmon."

† "Some years ago there was a marine eruption, or some such phenomenon which we could not account for in any other way. There was a vast quantity of sea fish drove ashore, of various kinds, and many that had never made their appearance on this coast before; Conger Eels above 7 feet long, but all dead. The water in the bays was so black and muddy for eight days after, that when our fishermen were hauling Haddock or any small fish, they could never discern the fish till hauled out of the water."—*Mr Gordon.*

natural means of cure much the same. Am not certain of our having lost any ancient diseases, but we have received several new ones formerly unknown here, viz.: The Palsey, Gout, and Epilepsy. We generally have a return of the Small-pox once in twenty years, which has always proved very destructive here, often sweeping away above a sixth of our people of all ages at a time. In 1701 above 90 died, most of them married people; in 1720, 80 from 21 years and downwards. We had them likewise in 1740,\* 1760,† and 1770, which proved more mild than any of the former, probably from the practice of inoculation, which succeeds here wonderfully. The present number of our people may be about 600, but upon the decrease, owing to losses at sea, fevers, and other diseases. The principal commercial productions are dry Ling, Cod, Tusk, Butter, Fish-oil, a few Hides and Calves' Skins. Manufactures none, except for the wear of the inhabitants."

"We have several circles here, with a trench in the inside, and a stone or hillock in the centre. Some of them have the outmost circle set round with rude stones, others only formed of earth. Castles we have none, except some old circular buildings, which go by the name of Pictish castles, the history of which is lost. They are generally surrounded with entrenchments, and of different bulk, but Mr Low will furnish you with measurements."

"The ordinary sports here are dancing, playing at football, and other diversions common to Scotland."

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\* 120.

† 90.

## WHALSEY.

*Tuesday, Augt. 9th.*—Took boat for Whalsey, 4 miles long, and from 2 to 3 broad, inhabited by about 80 families. The mansion house of Simbuster is placed in the S. end of it, surrounded with arable ground, the Corns, particularly Oats, excellent. In the garden, every garden stuff thrives well; Cherries now ripe and good; Strawberries excellent. Other kinds of plants likewise good.

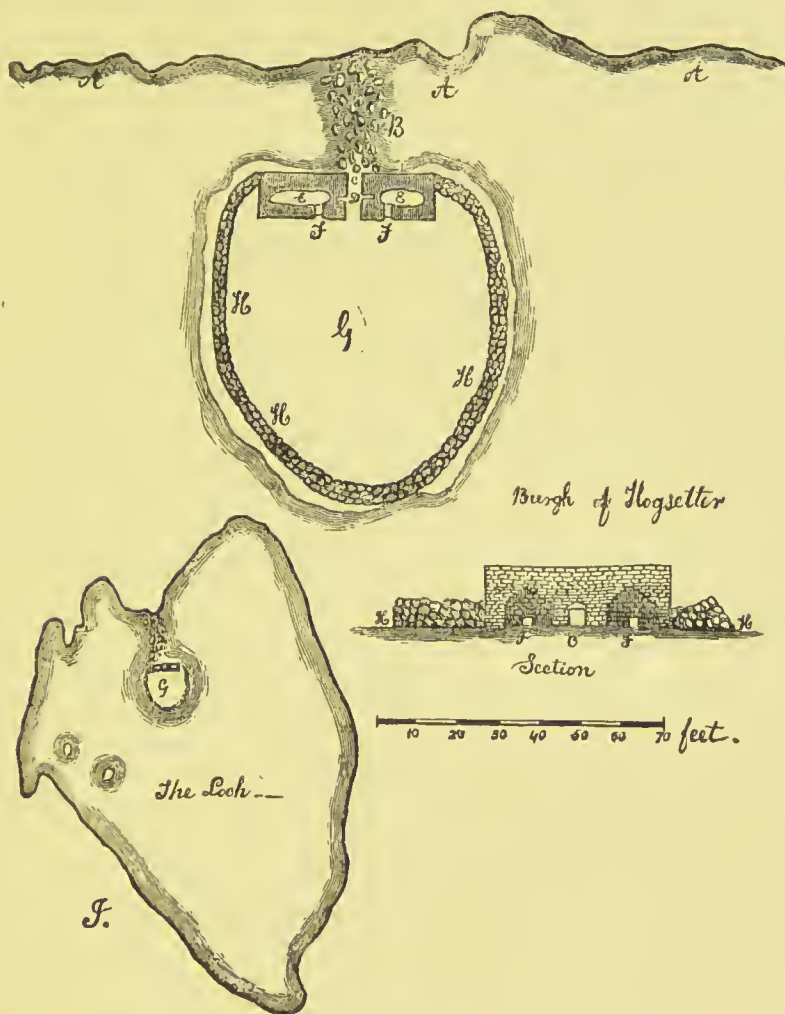
Simbuster, like other Schetland gentlemen, has an extensive fishing, and exports his fish to different parts of the world, splitting and curing for different markets. (*Vide* p. 137.)

The face of Whalsey is hilly and moorish, only inhabited about the sea-shores. The hills pasture numbers of Sheep, Cattle, and Shelties, affords shelter for numbers of Curlew, and a very few other Grallæ that build here.

The same appearance at the Ness of Chalister as at Udsta, in Fetlar (*Vide* p. 165), only here the mineral seems not so strong, nor affects the compass so briskly, the stone seems to partake more of the nature of moorstone, probably the iron lies deeper in the earth.

In this day's walk five Burghs, one, in a loch, of a singular construction, consists of a breastwork towards the land, and a strong stone wall surrounding the small holm, and enclosing a pretty large space of ground, capable of containing many people, with even their Cattle and best effects, but the figure will show it better than any description.





PLAN AND SECTION OF THE BURGH OF HOGSETTER,  
IN WHALSEY.

EXPLANATION.—*A*. The water edge; *B*. The bridge; *C*. The main entrance into the Burgh; *D*. Holes in each side the entrance, probably to receive a bar; *E*. Apartments within the wall; *F*. Entrances into these; *G*. The area surrounded by the wall; *H*. The stone wall; *I*. A plan of the loch, exhibiting in little what is expressed by the letters. The letters express the same thing in the plan, section, &c.

## BACK TO LERWICK.

Again crossed for Nesting, as the weather would not permit me to visit Skerries, small rocky isles eastward of Whalsey. These are three in number, Housay, Braru, and Gruny, two of them inhabited; besides several out rocks. They are much resorted to in summer on account of the fishing, but remarkable for nothing else.

*Wednesday, August 10th.*—Passed southward by Catfirth-voe, where several gentlemen have joined stocks, and at a large expense erected every conveniency for bleaching Linen, and this to encourage their own manufacture in this way, but this does not seem to have taken; the Schetland people seemingly not being inclined to spinning.

Crossed the large bay opposite to Rausburghness (where a large ruinous burgh). In the bay are the Isles of Glitness, consisting mostly of limestone; How-a-Staek, of which the same tradition is extant as of Frau-a-Staek (*Vide* p. 122); the Unicorn, famous for the wreck of a ship of that name when in pursuit of Bothwell, Duke of Orkney; the Brethren, two small rocks seen above water; Greenholm; Holm of Beoseter, all of little estimation.

Continued my route for Lerwick by the Knop of Kebister,\* where Mr Brand tells us “a varlet or wizard lived, commonly designed Luggie, concerning whom it was reported that, when the sea was so tempestuous that the boats durst not go off to the fishing, he used to go to that hill or know, wherein a hole, into which he let down his

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\* Or Luggie's Know.

lines and took up any fish he pleased, &c." However honest Brand might find these things, and notwithstanding Luggie poor fellow paid so dear for his fish (for it seems he was burned at Scalloway, p. 111), this Knop since his death has not only lost its faculty of yielding fish, but also the hole whence they were taken! *Risum teneatis amici?*

Landed once more at Lerwick; a few of the Dutch fishers in the harbour, where they come now and then, especially if they want anything from the Convoyers.

### GULBERWICK AND QUARF.

Having only seen the country to the southward of Lerwick from the sea,

*Monday, 15th August.*—Set out for the Ness of Schetland. Went thro' Gulberwick, fruitful in Corn of all kinds. Here, as well as elsewhere, I observed a new process of agriculture in sowing Oats. They mark out a piece of moss into beds, after the same manner as I have seen them plant Potatoes in Scotland, called the lazy-bed way; they then throw up the moss, earth, sand, &c., from the ditch, and sowing the oats on the stuff thus cast up, it thrives wonderfully. The way to Wharf or Quarf is thro' deep mosses and wild moor, almost impassable even at this season. Quarf is the narrowest part of the mainland, and therefore very convenient for transporting heavy burdens to the west side of Schetland, from Lerwick, and carrying them by water the greater part of the way, for it would be impossible to transport bulky matters thro' Schetland by land. The Quarf, or carrying place, is a valley among the Clifhills, well cultivated and inhabited; about a mile over,

surrounded by lofty mountains, a ridge of which runs from Sealloway near to Dunrossness. Took my way along the tops of the Clift-hills, but in a short time found myself bewildered in the thick fog so frequent in this country. By chance, after much travel, fell in with a woman, on her way to Coningsburg, who conducted me hither.

### CONINGSBURG.

The people of this small spot, a stout hardy race, by all accounts the wildest in Schetland. Tradition scandalises them much with regard to their humanity, particularly in entertaining strangers. It became proverbial, when one wanted to dismiss a stranger, or thought he stayed too long, to use the Coningsburgen phrase in Norn: "Myrk in e Liora, Luee in e Liunga, Tim in e Guest in e geungna;" "It's (mark\*) dark in the chimney, but it's light thro' the heath, it's still time for the stranger to be gone."

The name tells us that here has been a burgh or castle, and probably the chief in the isles, as the other component part of the same name would import. And here let it be remarked, that wherever any name in these isles is compounded of burgh, burrow, or any such sound, we are certain here either has been or is a remain of a Pietish-castle, tho' in many places the name only remains, the stones having been carried away for building houses. For example, we have Burrowfirth, Burrowness, Burgowater,

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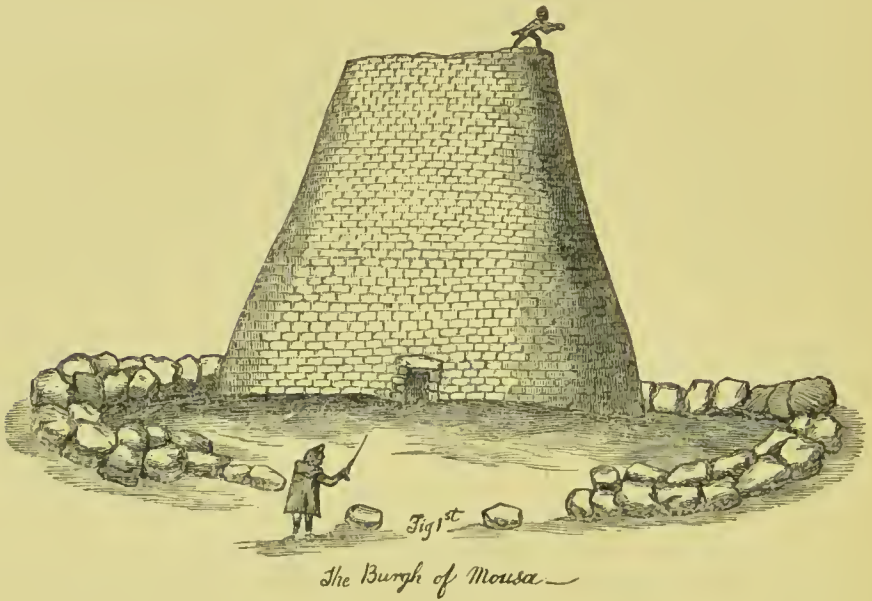
\* So pronounced in Scotland.

Burrowhead, Snaburgh, Seousburgh, Nounsburgh, and many others, in all which we either find a large well-defined ruin, a hillock, or other mark of what it has formerly been.

### MOUSA.

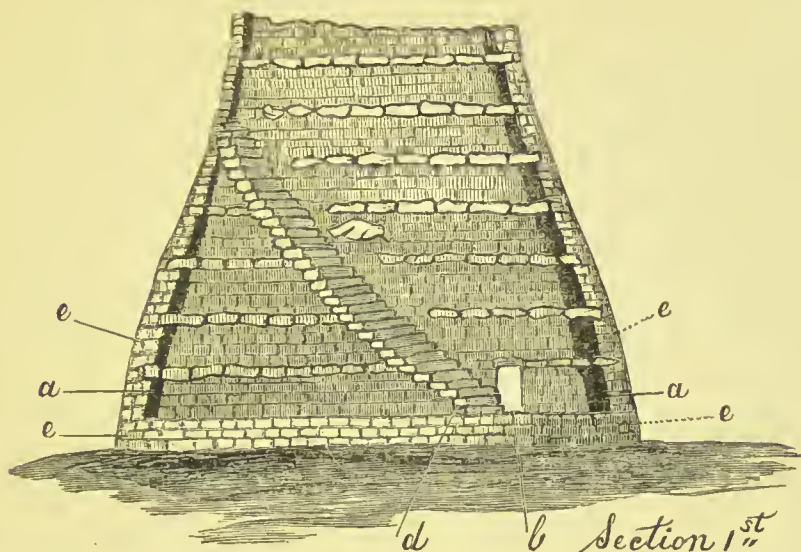
Took boat for Mousa, a small island, inhabited by eleven families, tolerably well cultivated, and producing well. What here strikes a stranger most, and indeed is the greatest antique curiosity in these isles, is the Burgh or Castle, the most entire of any in Schetland. The height of the outside is 42 feet, built exactly circular, not tapering to the top, but bulging out in an odd manner from the foundation, drawing smaller as it approaches the top, where it is again cast out from its least diameter. The inside height is 35 feet, being much choked up with rubbish. When one creeps thro' the entry, the inside is well built, the hollow cylindric not following the shape of the outside, nor does it seem divided into stories, as its height might easily have permitted. The inside is divided by four rows of holes, straight above one another, something like those in a pigeon house. These are not equal in number, being in one row 8, in another 18, in another 17. At a small height from the (now) floor, is a door by which one proceeds to the stair which leads to the top. This goes between the walls, spirally, but leads not round the building. As we walked up stairs, by turning round, observed the galleries, seven in number, and so high that one could almost walk upright in them. These are entered by stepping from the stair into the gallery, which goes round the building till we come to the stair. The roof of the first is

the floor of the second, and continued so to the top, which is not entire, so that we cannot see how this curious building terminated. The figure and sections follow :—

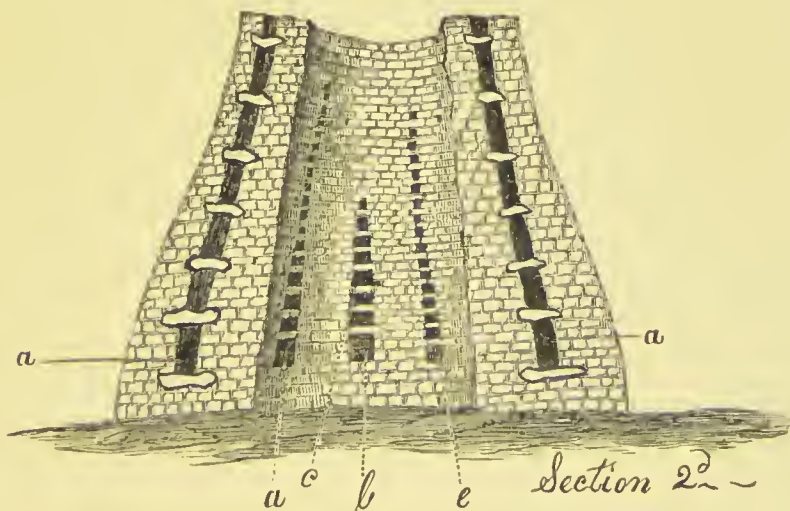


BURGH, WITH THE STONE RAMPART IN RUINS.



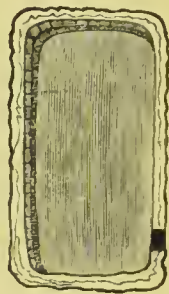


SECTION 1ST.—*a*. Part of the galleries, with their divisions; *b*. The door which leads to the stair and galleries; *d*. The stair; *e*. A part of the outer wall, the rest being removed to the end that the stair, galleries, and their divisions, might be seen.



SECTION 2ND.—*a*. The mouths of the galleries in section; *b*. The door of the stair; *c*. A set of holes above the door; *d*. Another set, 18 in number, to the left; *e*. A third set, 17 in number. *N.B.*—The fourth series cannot be seen in this section.

Landed on the main, opposite to Mousa, at a Burgh on a point of a rock, the land side surrounded by a stone wall or rampart, at a distance from the body of the work. Here, as at Fetlar (p. 170), observed numbers of foundations of small houses, exactly similar to these mentioned above, but as much in ruins. They are generally 14 feet long, and 6 or 8 broad, with about a foot or two of the wall still standing, and probably coeval with the Burgh itself. Here they are placed between the Burgh and the extreme point of the rock, and possibly might have been a sort of huts for the people to fly into in the time of publick disturbance, where they might be safe under the shelter of the Burgh.



Passed thro' Sandwick Parish, nothing remarkable there except the fine fields of excellent Corn, which, indeed, here as well as at Ness, would not disgrace even the most fertile countries. The soil sandy, produces plenty of the *Geranium cicutarium* (Fl. Suec. 625), not observable anywhere else, either here or in Orkney.

### DUNROSSNESS, &c.

Entered Dunrossness Parish, by far the best inhabited and cultivated part of the island. The soil either a thin moor, or a deep shifting sand. Here lay the estate of Brow, once worth 3000 Merks (near £200 Ster.) a year, now a mere wilderness; occasioned by the blowing of a small dusty kind of sand, which never possibly can rest, as the least puff of wind sets it all in motion, in the same manner as the drifting snows in winter. We still see the foundations

of the farm houses, but the ridges, &c., have entirely disappeared. In a windy day this spot is an Arabian desert in miniature, here the clouds of sand flying as far as the eye can reach, there the crowds of travellers, scarce to be seen for the drifting sand, riding to church; near the sea, the church, with the foundations almost blown away, the corpses entirely bare, in many instances the bones bleached white; farther inland the ruins of scattered buildings, both ancient and modern, all contribute to render the scene more distressing, and add to the depression of spirits occasioned by this dreary view. The sand penetrates everywhere; when I stepped into the kirk, observed it found its way thro' the minutest cranies, covering the whole pews, and thus becomes very troublesome in time of divine service, especially if the wind blows from the sea, whence the sand shower seems to proceed. Continued my course for Sumburgh-head, saw some small spots beginning to gather a new sward, but this is often interrupted, either by Rabbits or by the sands blowing it over. Near Sumburgh-head (called in the Dutch maps Swinburgh), is the seat of John Bruce, Esq. of Sumburgh, a gentleman to whom I have many obligations, both for his information and assistance by his servants in digging, &c.

The Mul of Sumburgh, or the extreme point of the headland, is fortified in the same manner as the Mul of Unst (*Vide* p. 55 and 157). Here the neck of land is cut by a ditch and strong wall, which must in old times have formed a considerable fortification. It encloses a plain and hill (the head); at the entrance, still observable the foundation of a large house, which probably served as a guardroom, along the wall, and at some distance, the marks

of numerous small buildings, exactly like those described in Unst.

The same Hawk in Sumburgh-head as described in Fetlar; saw one of these strike down and carry off one of Mr Bruce's Pigeons, and immediately made off to the head. Only a single pair here, as in most places else.

Sand blowing here discovers the face of the country to have been once quite different from its now appearance. In one place we see a sea-beach, as exactly formed as those which are presently along the shore, now covered by 20 feet of sand; sometimes foundations of circular and other buildings are discovered. Here, likewise, we dug up two tumuli, bared by sand blowing, in one of which we found 9 skulls or their remains, but the corpses had never been laid in any order, seemingly thrown together as chance directed, which seems to confirm the tradition of this being Lewis-men's graves. (*Vide* p. 103.\*)

There are about 14 ruinous burghs round the shores, and in small lochs of Dunrossness; one, on a small neck of a sea-rock, resembling that described in Whalsey, only here the surrounding stone wall is wanting, and indeed the high rocks of the sea well supply its place.

In the seabank here is a stratum of large Oysters, some of which were dug up 9 and 10 inches over. I could find none so large after a whole day's digging, but enough to confirm me of their existence. Those I got were rather deformed, and very thick, both shells still in their natural

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\* In Dunrossness Parish was sometime ago found a copper medal of Vespasian, the reverse *Judaa victa*. It was turned up in ploughing the ground.

position, and in some the pearls were still to be found. The pearls were considerably hard, but upon being touched readily exfoliated, which shews the formation of these bodies. The air hardened them, as also the lesser shells of Cockles, Limpets, &c., likewise found in the same place. These Oysters are entirely fossil, none being to be had alive within 20 miles of Sumburgh.

Round Sumburgh head, especially where the tides are quick, is a large fishing of Seathfish (the Coalfish; Br. Zool. 152), which are here caught in great plenty, and cured with the heads on, like Scotch cured Keeling. These are generally sold at a Scottish market; the prices vary much, but in general they are sold cheap. The Seath delights in tideways, and like the Lye,\* another species of this genus, frequently seen skipping near the surface, is a strong made fish, and grows to a large size. When fat eats well fresh, but I never tasted it dry; however imagine it must be rather coarse. Found here sometimes 3 feet long, and Tusk, tho' seldom, the same.

Turned westward by Quendal bay, a large open road capable of containing a numerous fleet, sometimes the rendezvous of the Dutch fleet when hindered from getting up to Lerwick. Crossed the sands once more towards Fitful-head, a large hill with a shelving precipice, frequented by the rock birds.

To the northward of Fitful-head the country puts on a most beautiful appearance. Fine fields of Corn intermixed with meadow and pasture grounds, here and there a loch

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\* The Pollock. B. Zool. 154.



or other piece of water, all contribute to render this side the most desirable part of Schetland.

Near Bigtown, an estate belonging to Mr Bruce of Simbister, he at a very large expense erected a proper mill for grinding any kind of Corn, the produce of the country. This is the only one of the kind in the country; elsewhere they use the small mill described p. 74 *sp.*

The fields round Bigtown (called so by way of eminence I suppose, because it is the largest farm in the county) just now full of most excellent Bear and Oats, approaching to ripeness, both as good of their kinds as even in the south of Scotland. The Oats are small but hardy, and answer much better for this boisterous climate than the larger kinds in use elsewhere. Here is a bare old fashioned house built by the Stewarts, proprietors, but now inhabited by servants.

At a small distance is St Ringan's Isle, inhabited by a single family. The remains of an old chapel is still to be seen, said to be dedicated to the saint of that name. The lower story is vaulted, and probably has served as a burying place. The isle is joined to the land by a sandbank, covered with the plants *Bunias*, *Cakile* (Fl. Suec. 737), and *Pulmonaria maritima* (163). The rocks much frequented with Seals and Otters.

At some distance from Bigtown, the remains of Ireland, one of the steepled churches taken notice of by Brand, but could not have assisted the ladies (as he says) in giving "advertisement to one another," as a good many hills much higher than the steeples intervene; but Brand took many of his wonders upon trust.

Struck northward to Maywick, where is the loch that



supplies Simbister's mill, frequented by Wild Duck and Teal. Took boat here, as I had no inclination to repass the Clift-hills (*Vide* p. 179) thro' the eternal mists that cover their tops, and the swampy surfaces; however they seemed to owe me a spite, and paid it in squalls, which almost tore our boat out of the water, rendering it even dangerous to row thro' this sound tho' no sail was set. This was occasioned by the height of the hills and the indraught of the sound, which runs from Maywick to Scalloway, the space of 12 miles.

Touched at Haveroy, a good fishing isle; Burra and House, joined together by a riff, fitter for pasturage than tillage, except in a few spots. In Burra is the third steepled kirk, now belonging to the Parish of Bressay. Burra is pretty well inhabited, about 6 miles long, the breadth inconsiderable. House is mostly moorish.

Hildezæ, Papay, Oxna, Linga, are small isles off Scalloway, pretty well situate for fishing on the west Hav; most of them well provided with pasture.

### BRESSAY.

*Monday, 22nd August.*—Crossed the Quarf once more for Bressay. This island forms one side of the Harbour or Sound of Lerwick, commonly called Bressay Sound, and by the Dutch "the Grotta bay," described page 73. Bressay is about 6 miles long and from 3 to 4 broad, pretty well inhabited; many spots well cultivated; the Corns good, and for this backward year nearest the sickle of any in Schetland.

Here is Gardie, a large, showy, unfinished house, the

property of Mr Henderson, who shewed me a fine collection of medals and medallions picked up by one of his friends in Germany. Some of these are very large and well struck, generally relating to some point of British history, but none of them taken notice of in Tindal's continuation.

The greater part of Bressay is a barren moss, and heathy hill, very convenient for Moorfowl, but entirely destitute of these; but this is not so much to be wondered at, when we observe the Schetland heath, their food; it seldom comes to a flower, nor does it seem to have that strength of growth I have observed elsewhere.

Bressay is not so much cut into bays as others of the Schetland isles, yet is not entirely destitute of harbours, having two on the east side, the first at Culbenschburgh, the other at Aithvoe, covered by the isle of Beosetter, tho' these are but little frequented, the harbour of Lerwick being so near.

Four Burghs in Bressay, all in ruins. In the burial-yard several grave stones pretty well cut, none ancient; one of black marble, with a Dutch inscription. Gardie's burial place at some distance from the church-yard; a very neat free-stone building, but ill kept.

In the Bressay Hav, the largest fish of their kinds in Schetland, tho' not the most in number. Tusk sometimes got 3 feet and a half. The Wolf-fish, *Anarhichas lupus* (Lin. Syst. 430. Br. Zool. 119, pl. 7) sometimes got here, but seldom, and not large; these I saw only 18 inches; nor do I hear of its being got very large in these seas. It is here called sometimes Stonebiter.

Here it will be proper, before we take leave of the Schetland fishery, to insert the numbers exported thence

this season, which has been but an ordinary one, owing to the weather having broke soon, and cut off a good part of their fishing season.

Exported to foreign parts, 187,001 Cod, Ling & Tusk, making 7193½ cwt.		
Sent coastwise, . . .	121,800	Do., 2969
	<u>308,801</u>	<u>10,162½ „</u>

Wet Cod exported, . .	33	barrels.
Do. sent coastwise,	<u>128</u>	Do.
	<u>161</u>	
Herrings exported, . .	573	Do.
Do. sent coastwise,	<u>654</u>	Do.
	<u>1227</u>	

This account given me by Mr Bisset, the shipping officer. But this is exclusive of the fish (Cod and Tusk) expended in the country, those caught by the Dutch and other strangers, besides a few smuggled to strangers.

The Herring account is merely nothing to the many thousand barrels annually caught by the Dutch Doggers and others (*Vide* p. 69), which is out of all proportion to the few caught in a single voe, or by a single country ship or two at sea. This surely demands the attention of Government, not only to encourage but to secure our own fishery.

## NOSS.

Crossed a small but rapid sound for Noss, a fine island, covered with verdure and well cultivated. From the place where we landed, proceed by (at first) a gentle ascent, till by degrees it becomes pretty steep, and arrive at the Head,

so famous for its numerous wild-fowl. Noss-head is a vast rock facing the S.E., said by Mr Brand to be 300 fathoms high; however it is not the third of this measure in my opinion. It looks something higher than Copinsha, which is not above 50 fathoms.\* Like Copinsha it contains myriads of wild-fowl; however is neither so high, of so great extent, nor contains a tenth of the birds mentioned in the Kem of Foula. Of all the volaries I ever saw this is the first; Noss, Copinsha, Hoyhead and others nothing to be compared to Foula.

The most remarkable particular in Noss is the Cradle by which Gardie people go into the Holm of Noss. The holm is a little eastward of Nosshead, about 16 fathom from the island, and equal with it in height, seemingly has been torn from it by some convulsion in nature, as the strata in both are the same and at the same height. Some adventurous climber has ventured his neck (*Vide* Brand, p. 118) to fix several stakes in the small stratum of earth which covers this rock, and by means of a rope round these, they run in upon a machine called a cradle, with a bottom of ropes, either to fetch out wild fowls, their eggs, or to carry out and in a few sheep which are fattened here. The birds that frequent this holm are the Black and White Gull, and the Herring Gull. The method they now take to fasten the cradle rope is this. In a small breeze of favourable wind, a man fastens a piece of common pack thread, of a proper length, to a fishing rod, which, by the help of the wind, he throws over the stakes; by

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\* According to Mr James Robertson's measurement it is 480 feet high. Robn.'s Tour. MSS.

this draws a small rope round them, and by the last the great one, on which the machine runs. A man used to it (or any one, for there is little danger if the stakes are firm) is put into the cradle, and by the help of the rope warps himself over, secures his prey, and is drawn back by a small rope fixed to the machine. There are many insulated rocks round Orkney and Schetland which might be got at in the same manner, if stakes were once fastened on them. A few sheep grow very fat in this holm, insomuch that I was informed by the proprietor he had generally 12 marks of Tallow out of every one of them.

The Chapel of Noss is small, but of neat workmanship, and the yard is still used as a burying ground. The walls still mostly entire.

Was here informed the Sea Pie is migratory from Schetland. With us in Orkney it continues the whole year.

The Corns in Bressay in great forwardness, as also in Noss.

### INHABITANTS.

Having now proceeded thro' every corner of Schetland, it will be necessary, before I take a final leave of it, to say something of the inhabitants. In no part of the world will a stranger expect less from the appearance of the country, and find it more made up by the civilities of the inhabitants. Amongst all ranks this prevails in a high degree according to their ability. The gentry are famous for hospitality, which even reigns among the poorest sort. Wherever I came I found all willing to do me every service in their power, either by information or otherwise.

Their horses and servants were always ready to attend me, and many gentlemen as well as clergy were so obliging as attend me in different places, and to point out everything worthy the knowledge of the traveller. In a word, a sense of Schetland humanity is so firmly rooted in my mind that it is with the greatest pleasure I thus pay them my acknowledgements in the most publick manner.

On holidays the people of all ranks appear neat and clean, but plainly dressed; without the ornaments of the which they some years ago were so extravagantly fond.

All ranks live much on animal food, such as fish, flesh, butter, and milk, with little bread, which is supplied in some measure by Potatoes. Some are a good deal addicted to dram drinking; as must be the case in fishing countries. The common drink at table (instead of small beer) is grog, a liquor composed of brandy and water, made to the taste of the drinker, but very disagreeable to a stranger.

The diseases most prevalent here are coughs, pains of the breast, the hive, an inveterate kind of itch, fluxes, rheumatisms, seurvey, and of old leprosy, obstructions of the menses, and a dreadful disease particularly to be found in Unst and Fetlar. (*Vide supra* p. 159.)

The natives of Schetland marry young, and are very prolific, yet it seems a problem whether they increase or not owing to the way of life, many accidents at sea which they meet with, and which shorten many of their days. The small-pox, till of late, was peculiarly fatal.

As to their make, the Schetlanders are generally robust and healthy, are adventurous in fishing, abstemious while at sea, but lazy when they have an opportunity of being so, as I had an opportunity to observe in those who have



ships to protect them in time of fishing; where, in the finest weather, the boat's crews (instead of proceeding to the fishing ground whilst the ship followed as the wind permitted) all slipt on board the vessel and left her to tug the boats as she could, and thereby lost much of the time which is then very precious.

Having now concluded my business here, I, about the latter end of August, took a passage on board an Orkney boat for the Fair Isle; but the boisterous weather prevented us from coming near it, so that for the following short description of this, and a few of the North Isles, I am obliged to Mr James Robertson, who, under the eye of Dr John Hope at Edinburgh, visited these isles, and to the latter gentleman I am obliged for Mr Robertson's papers. I have only to add that after a most troublesome passage I landed at Holmsound, in thirteen hours from Schetland.

### FAIR ISLE.

"The Fair Isle lies about midway between Orkney and Schetland. It rises in three high lands, known by the following names. The Warthill, to the north-west; Sheep Craig, to the south-east; and Setterness, to the north-east. The whole island is naturally fenced with perpendicular rocks, except on the north-east end, where there are two bays where boats can conveniently land; the one on the north side being a tolerable harbour for vessels not exceeding 60 tons. It is, however, to be observed, that two or three only can lie here with safety. The anchoring ground is on the inside of a small rock called the Staek, which lies nearly in the middle of the entry. Ships always go in

and out by the west side of that roek ; and if it ehanees to blow hard from the north, which leads straight into the harbour, it will be proper to make fast a rope to the Staek, and ride under its lee."

"The Fair Isle is about three miles long, and about one and a-half broad, fruitful in Corn and Grass, &c. The coast abounds with Ling, Cod, Seth, Tusk, Skate, Holibut, Dogfish, &c., together with several kinds of Shell-fish, and a great number of Sea-fowls hatched among the cliffs of the rocks."

"The number of inhabitants may be about 170. The men are employed in eatching fish, which they salt and sell at low pries to their laird, who has them bound to sell him all their goods, altho' they might have an advaneed pree from others. The women are industrious, eonstantly at work knitting Stoekings, and Gloves, or spinning Lint, and woollen yarn. The people resemble those of Sehetland, are all Presbyterians, are eivil and hospitable to strangers, and live amieably among themselves. They speak the English language with a good deal of the Norn aecent. Their houses are poor, their food is mostly milk, fish, wild fowl, and wild fowl eggs, which they take from among the preeipiees by elimbing or going down the rocks by the assistance of a rope."

### SHAPINSHA.

"Shapinsha is about 6 miles long and 3 broad, the ground is dry and not hilly ; the soil is in some parts a elay, in others a gravel, and in others a blaek vegetable earth or moss. On the south side, at Elwiek, there is a good harbour for ships."

## STRONSA.

“Stronsa is nearly of an equal bigness with Shapinsha, lies to the N.E., distance two leagues; is more unequal and moorish, full of moss and heath except along the shore, where the ground is cultivated and inclines much to sand. It is provided with two good harbours, one at Lingasound fenced with Lingaholm; the other at Newhall, covered by Papa Stronsa.”

## SANDA AND NORTH RONALDSHA.

“Sanda is twelve miles long, and in many places does not exceed one in breadth. Except at the south end which is clay or gravelly, the whole island is extremely sandy, and it is probable has got its name from this circumstance. It is well inhabited, hath two good roads for ships, one at Kettletoft on the south side, guarded by the little holm of Elsness; the other at Otterswick on the north side, fenced by N. Ronaldsha, which is the most northern island in Orkney, and, like Sanda, affords good grain and pasture, and partakes of the same sandy soil. There is no moss in either of these islands, but the inhabitants are obliged to bring their Peats from Eda; the principal fuel here among the commons being the dung of their cattle, dried tangle, and other sea-weeds. The lower class of these islands live much on fish as do those in North Ronaldsha on Seal, the latter they salt and hang in their chimneys to smoke.”

## EDA.

“Eda lies about a league to the west of Sanda, is 6 miles in length, and about 1 in breadth, full of hills and mosses, but there is good pasture for cattle and sheep. It is thinly inhabited, for the ground is mostly in an uncultivated state except near the shore. The natives of this island pursue the fishing more, and are said to be better fishers than the other islanders, but whether it is owing to industry or necessity I cannot say, most probably the latter, because little Corn grows on the island. Calf-sound at the north end of the isle is a safe road for ships; it is sheltered on the north by the Calf of Eda.”

## WESTRA.

“Westra lies to the north-west of Eda 2 leagues, as also Papa Westra, both pleasant and fertile, well inhabited isles. Westra is about 7 miles in length, hilly, the soil dry, sandy and gravelly. The soil of Papa is much the same, but is only 3 miles in length. Westra has a convenient harbour at Pirowa.”

## ROUSA.

“Three leagues to the south of Westra lies Rousa, 6 miles long, and 4 broad, like Hoy is mountainous, mostly in a state of nature, and ill inhabited.”

“Between Westra and Kirkwall lie North Faira, Egilsha, Inhallo, Gairsa, Wyre, and Damsay, small isles producing Corn and Grass, as do many small holms not mentioned.”

## A P P E N D I X.





No. I.

EXTRACT from a PROCESS contained in a SESSION REGISTER  
anent Washing Diseased People (page 8), and Telling  
Out Diseases (*ibid*).

*Saturday, July last, 1708.*—After Prayer Sedr., Minister  
and elders *pro re nata*.

The said day the minister reported that being informed that Kathrine Brown, spouse to William Stensgar in South-side, had been employing one Kathrine Taylor, a cripple beggar woman in Stromness, to come to her house and wash the said William, who had been long siek and afflicted in his bed, that by her Soreerie and eharming he might come to his health, and that the said Kathrine Brown coming to a common Slap\* on the high way, carrying the water wherewith the said William was allegit to be washed, in a large Stoup, upon the twenty fourth of June last, about one or two hours in the morning, and emptying the said Stoup in the said Slap:\* wherefore he had appointed to Summon ye said Kathrine Brown and her Husband to this Dyet. The said Kathrine and her Husband being called compeared, and both of them being aeused, denyed the charge, and the said Kathrine stiffly denyed that she had been at the common Slap above written, whereupon the witnesses being called, compeared.

1. John More son to William More in Yeldabree of the age of twenty four years, being admitted and deeply sworn, purged of malice and partial counsell, deponed; That he

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\* A stile or gateway.

saw Kathrine Brown upon the twenty fourth day of June last more than an hour before sunrising, empty a stoup of water in the above mentioned Slap, and he coming to the said Slap did find a Stone and feal (turf) on the said water, or where it was spilled and as he was coming near he saw the said Kathrine gather up her coats, and run away most speedily. And that he suspecting some devilrie did break down a slap in another place of the dike and passed over.

2. John Allan in Grew &c. Deponed, That the same verie morning about the same time, he saw a woman at some little distance from him which he thought to be Kathrine Brown and that she went strait towards her own house.

3. William Brown brother to the said Kathrine, Deponed, That the same verie morning condescended upon by John More about the same time, he saw his sister Kathrine at the Slap, and he passing thro' the Slap a little before she came he found the Slap perfectly dry.

4. Helen Allen &c. deponed, That the verie day before the water was emptied in the Slap, the said Kathrine Brown came to her house seeking the said Kathrine Taylor to her Goodman.

5. George Langskail &c. Deponed, That upon the twenty fourth of June he passed thro' the slap forementioned before sunrising and that he saw water in the said slap, and a little after his passing the same he was overtaken by bodily indisposition\* tho' he would not blame the said Kathrine Brown therefore.

After several things had passed in the Session we are told That the said Kathrine Brown and her Husband confessed that the said Kathrine Taylor was called and came

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\* The meaning of this is :—They imagined the person who went next thro' the gateway was infected with the disease which had now left the other.

to their house, and all She did was to say over half a dozen words out of a psalm like a prayer beside the Husband.

The Session appointed Kathrine Taylor to be summoned to answer for using Sorcerie.

*Sess. 2d on the same.*

*Sept. 5. 1708.* Which day compeared Kathrine Taylor in Stromness being summoned to this dyet as were also William Stensgar and Kathrine Brown before mentioned, and the said Kathrine Taylor being accused of alleged Sorcerie and charms—she confessed that Kathrine Brown came for her when she was in Oliver Taylors house in the Southside and told to her her Husbands condition viz, That he wanted the power of one of his Knees, and enquired her if she could not *tell out the paine* of the said knee. Whereupon the said Kathrine Taylor condescended and went with the said Kathrine Brown to her house, and did *tell out the pain* of his knee. Being asked by what means she did it, She answered, She laid her hand on his bare Knee and spake these words,

“As I was going by the way I met the Lord Jesus Christ in the likeness of another man, he asked me what tydings I had to tell and I said I had no tydings to tell, but I am full of pains, and I can neither gang nor stand.”  
“Thou shalt go to the holie kirk, and thou shalt gang it round about, and then sit down upon thy knees, and say thy prayers to the Lord, and then thou shalt be as heall as the hour when Christ was born.”

She repeated also the twenty third psalm indistinctlie and declared she did or spake no more. She likewise declared she learned this from an old woman when she was a child; and that she has heard from others that a pain or a stitch has been *telled out* in that manner, and that she herself has done it before.

## No. II.

INSTRUCTIONS *given to RANSALMEN (called in Orkney Law-rightmen\*) from the Schetland Acts. Act 26.*

## THE ACT.

In a bailie court lawfully fenced the whole householders of the Parish present, the Bailie is to cause his clerk read a list of such honest men in the parish as are fit to be Ransalmen, and then he is to enquire each of them if they are willing to accept the place of a Ransalman. If any of them refuse to accept, the Bailie may fine him in ten pounds Scots; and those that accept, the Bailie asks the whole Householders particularly if they have any thing to object against any of those men why they may not be made Ransalmen, and no objection being made, then the following instructions are to be read to them.

You are at any time, night or day, you may see needfull, to call for assistance, and to enter into any house within the parish and to search the same as narrowly as you can; and upon any suspencion of theft if they refuse you the keys you are to break open their doors or chests, and if you find any thing that is stollen you are to bring the thief and the fang to the Bailie, or secure both and acquaint the Bailie. If you have any scruple about any thing you find in the house you are to enquire how they came by it, and if they refuse to tell, take witness upon their refusal, and let the things be secured while the Bailie be acquainted. You are also to examine the houschold stores of Kelp and Meal and see if they be correspondent to their stocks; and likewise the wool, yarn, webs, stockings, &c., and enquire how they

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\* Vide Dr Wallace's Orkney. p. 146.

*referred to 154 Orkney*

came by all these, and if they can give no satisfactory answer thereto, and brough and hamel, you are to inform against them.

## 2.

You are to enquire into the lives and conversations of families, whether there is any discord, or unbecoming carriage betwixt man and wife, parent and child, master and servant, or any other unchristian or unlawfull practice in the family. You are to rebuke such and exhort them to amend, if they obey it is well, if not you are faithfully to represent such to the Judicatory competent, and bring the best evidences you can against all such offenders.

## 3.

You are to prevent all quarrels and scolding as far as in your power, by commanding the contending parties to the peace, and if they persist, require witness against them, and call for assistance to separate them, and give in a faithfull report of it to the Fiscal or Clerk of Court; and in case you are not witness to any Scolding that happens, you are to gather the best evidence thereof you can, and make report thereof as aforesaid.

## 4.

If you hear any person cursing or swearing, you are to demand of them the fine, and if they refuse to pay you are to require witness against them, and report it to the Court. One-third of the fine is to yourself, and two thirds to the poor.

## 5.

That you narrowly enquire into your neighbourhood, who sits at home from the Kirk on the Sabbath day, and from the dyets of Catichism, and if they can give no sufficient reason for their so doing, that you cause them to pay the fine to be applied as aforesaid. And that you take particular notice in your neighbourhood anent keeping the



Sabbath day, and if you find any breach thereof that you report the same.

## 6.

You are strictly to observe the Country acts anent keeping good neighbourhood; such as, that none injure others in their grass and corn, and rebuke the offenders with certification that if they continue so to do you will inform the court against them, and that they build their dykes sufficiently and tuncously under the pains contained in the acts.

## 7.

That Tenants do not abuse their land, nor demolish their houses thro' sloth or carelessness; that you reprove such, and if they continue so to do against the Landmaster you are to report them. . . .

## 8.

You are to enquire if there is in your neighbourhood any idle vagabond person, and acquaint such that they must either betake themselves to some honest employ, or you will inform against them so as they may be punished, and ordered into service; and that the poor be taken care of in your respective quarters, and not suffered to stray abroad, nor are you to allow any Beggar or Thigger (Sorner) from any other parish to pass thro' your bounds, and if they offer so to do you will secure them till they be punished according to the country acts.

## 9.

That you try all the Dogs in your Quarter and that none be allowed to keep a Dog that can take a Sheep unless he is allowed to keep a sheep dog by the Bailie; and that none keep scare sheep otherwise than in the act; and that the acts be observed anent pounding, hounding, marking, and taking of sheep.



## 10.

You are to enquire into your quarter anent all persons using any manner of witchcraft, charms, or any other abominable, devilish superstitions, and faithfully inform against them so as they may be brought to condign punishment.

## 11.

You are to examine all tradesmen in your bounds and see that they make sufficient work and do not impose upon any in their prices, and if you find any such transgression, that you inform against them so as they may be punished as the law Directs.

## 12.

Upon any suspesion of Theft, two or three Ranselmen may take as many witnesses with them and go to the neighbour parish and ransal, and if they catch a thief they are to acquaint the Bailie of that parish thereof, who will order the thief to be secured.

And in the last place as you are intrusted with a power of inspecting the lives and manners of others, so let your own good life and conversation be exemplary to them for good, and take care you are not found guilty of these faults yourselves that you are called to reprove in others, if you should, your punishment shall be double to theirs. Now all these instructions as far as in your power you promise and swear solemnly in the sight of Almighty God and as you shall answer to him at the great day, faithfully and honestly to observe and perform, So help you God.

## No. III.

\*RESPITE by JAMES V. *in favours of* EDWARD SINCLAIR *and others for the Slaughter of* JOHN, EARL OF CAITHNESS†, *Dated 19th September 1539.*

James be the grace of God King of Scottis. To all and sundry our Justices, Wardanis, Lieutenantis, Justice Clerkis, Schireffis, Stewartis, Crownaris, thare Deputes, Provostis, Aldermene and Bailies of Burrowis, and all utheris our officiairs present and to cum, and thare deputis, liegis, subditis quham it effeirs to quhais knowlege thir our letteris sall cum, greting. Wit ye ws of oure speciale grace to have respitt, supersedit and delayit, and be thir our letteris in the law and by the law specialie respittis, supersedis and delayis Edward Sinclare of Strome, Magnus Sinclare of Wersetter, Johnne Sinclare of Tollap, William Sinclare of House, Olive Sinclare of Helwra, Magnus Sinclare, Lawrence Sinclare, James Sinclare, James Cragy of Brogh, Johnne Rendale, Adam Sclater, Johnne Burnes, Johnne Cromate, Magnus Cromate, Robert Hercas, Johnne Hercas, George Hercas, Williame Peirsone, Johnne Jamezing, William Hardy, Gilbert Cragy, Williame Yorstone, Walter Forester, Christie Jame, Magnus Midhouse, Johnne Loutit, Johnne Papplay, Magnus Gariach, William Cragy, Johnne Cragy of Bankis, and Edward Birsten, and generally all and sindry utheris persones kynnismen, freyndis, seruandis, assis-taris, adherentis, part takaris and complices with the said Edward and personnes above written, dwelland within the

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\* From the original parchment found among a Schetland gentleman's Papers.

† *Vide* Wallace's Orkney, 1700, p. 95; and Registrum Secreti Sigilli, XIII. 28.

ylis of Orknay and Zetland, being with thame in cumpany at the comitting of ony crymes, and art and part with thame thair intill in ony tyme bygane, befor the day of the dait of thir presents, ffor art and part of the convocation and gadering of our liegis in arrayit battel aganis umquhill Johnne, Erle of Caithness, and for art and part of the slauchter of the said Erle, and his freyndis, scruandis, and part takaris, being with thame in cumpany at that tyme, and for all utheris slauchteris, mutilatiounis, oppressiounis, reiffis, forthocht felonies, tressonis, crymis, transgressiounis, and offensis quhatsumever comittit and done be thame or ony of thame, or in any uther part or place within our realm in ony tymes bygane before the day of the dait hereof, Tresoun in our own proper persone allenarlie exceptit, ffor the space of nyntene zeris next to cum efter the day of the dait of thir presentis to indure, but any revocatioun, obstakle, impediment, or again-calling quhatsumever. Attour we will grantis and ordainis that this oure speciale respitt, supersedere and delay sall be of als grate strenth, avale, force and effect to ye persones that are not namyt and comprehendit in the samyne, being with the said Edward and his complices at the comitting of the saidis crymes, and art and part with thame thairintill as an thare names and surnames were specialie and particularlie [insert] therintill. Quhairfore we charge straitlie and commandis zou all and sundrie oure Justices, Wardanis, Lieutenantis, Justice Clerkis, Schireffis, Stewartis, Crounaris, Provestis, Aldermene, and Baillies of Burrowis, and all utheris our officiaris present and to cum, and zour deputis, liegis and subditis forsaidis, that nane of zou tak upon hand to call, journey, attache, arrest, accuse, molest, truble, follow and persew the saidis persones, thare kynnismen, freyndis, scruandis, assistaris, adherentis, part takaris and complices, or any of thame, within the saides boundis, for the saidis crymes bygane, or to do or attempt ony thing in contrair, violation or breking of this oure speciale respitt, supersedere

and delay in ony wise during all the tyme and space aboue written, under all the hiest pane and charge that efter may follow. Discharging zou and ilkane of zou of your offices in that part in the meyntyme by thir oure letteris, given under our privie Sele at Striveling the nyntene day of September, and of oure regne the xxvij zere. [1539.]

Per signaturam manu S. D. N.  
Regis Subscriptam.

Upon the label to which the seal (which is broken off) had been affixed, thus inscribed: "Respectuatio Edwardi Sincler de Strome & triginta aliorum."

Marked thus on the back :

"Ane nyntene zeres respitt to Eduart Sincler and his complices, for the slauchter of the Erle of Caithness, &c."

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